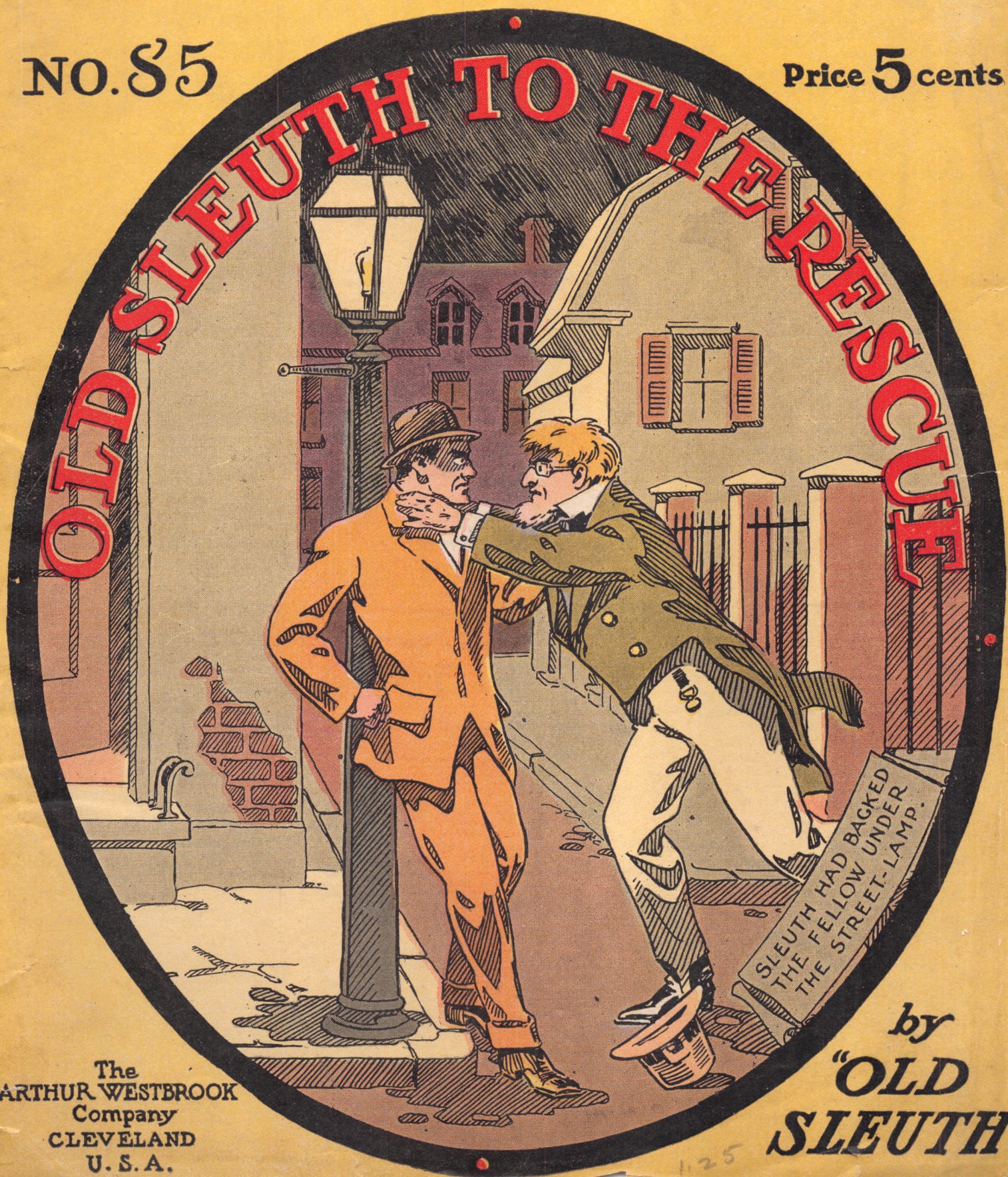




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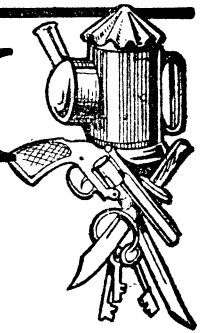


The
ARTHUR WESTBROOK
Company
CLEVELAND
U. S. A.

by
"OLD
SLEUTH"



OLD SLEUTH WEEKLY



A Series of
**THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES
EVER PUBLISHED**

No. 85.

THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY, CLEVELAND, U. S. A.

Vol. II.

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Old Sleuth to the Rescue.

A STARTLING NARRATIVE OF HIDDEN TREASURE.

By OLD SLEUTH.

CHAPTER I.

"COME and save her! come quick, or she will be murdered!"

Old Sleuth, the greatest of all detectives, had not been engaged "on a case" in a long time. Indeed, it was supposed by many that he had retired from the detective business; but such is not the case. The great criminal trailer is always ready, when other detectives are baffled, to take a great case in hand.

As stated, the detective had been disengaged for a long time. He was walking along Broadway one evening, when suddenly a hand was laid upon his arm. He turned and looked down—for the touch had come from a little, pale-faced girl, poorly dressed, and very sickly looking—and as she caught the detective's eye the little girl uttered the words with which we open our narrative.

The child's eyes glared wildly, her little features were convulsed with excitement and expectancy, and her voice was tremulous. At a glance the great Sleuth saw that the girl was in earnest, and in deadly fear.

"What is the matter, my child?" said the detective, in his usual kindly voice when speaking to children or to the oppressed and terror-stricken.

"Come quick!" she answered, "or sister will be murdered!"

"Come with me, little one."

The detective led the child along, intending to turn down a side street to escape observation, as he saw that the episode was already attracting attention. They reached the corner, and he would have turned toward the west, when the child exclaimed, as she tugged at his hand:

"Come dis way! come quick!" She drew him toward the east side of the great thoroughfare.

Once away from the crowds which at all hours throng Broadway, the detective said:

"Why do you come to me, child?"

"I have been looking for you."

"You have been looking for me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not know you; who am I?"

"You are Old Sleuth, the great detective."

The officer was surprised, and he asked:

"Who told you I am Old Sleuth, the detective?"

"Micky O'Reilly pointed you out to me one day."

"And who is Micky O'Reilly?"

"He is a bootblack."

"And he told you I was Old Sleuth?"

"Yes."

"When did he tell you?"

"Oh, a good many months ago; and I've seen you often since."

"And you were looking for me to-night?"

"Yes."

"And some one is to be murdered, you think?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"Who?"

"My sister."

"Where does your sister live?"

"I will show you."

"Who is going to murder your sister?"

"Some bad men."

"Some bad men?" repeated the detective.

"Yes."

"Why are some bad men going to murder your sister?"

"My sister will tell you all about it; let's hurry, or we will find her murdered when we get there!"

"Where?"

"At our house."

The detective did not attach much importance to the child's statements. He thought it was some neighbor's quarrel, and that the child, knowing he was a detective, in her childish fear and excitement had run out to find him. Little did he dream that he was on the verge of the greatest case that had ever attracted his attention or taxed his courage and ingenuity.

The detective from habit was always on his guard, however, and even upon the most trivial occasions fell back upon his habitual cunning. He believed there was nothing

ing in the case, as has been stated, and yet he was prepared to admit other possibilities. Caution had become a life-long habit with him, and having concluded to go with the child, he decided to work a transform. The child had recognized him as Old Sleuth, and he thought it just as well to come one of his lightning changes merely as a matter of precaution in case there should be anything in the case.

"My child," he said, "can you read?"

"Yes, sir."

"What street is that?"

The detective pointed to the half-faded little board sign on the side of an old corner house.

"I can't see from here," said the child.

"Go by the light," said Sleuth.

The child stepped away about ten feet, her little eyes fixed on the sign, and, as it fortunately chanced, there were no passers-by at the moment. The child could not decipher the sign, and she turned to rejoin Sleuth when an exclamation fell from her lips, carried in tones of deepest distress and disappointment:

"He's gone away! He's run away from me!" muttered the child, "and sister will be murdered!"

A man stood near the spot where the child had last seen Sleuth. She approached him and said:

"Did you see a gentleman go away from here?"

"What sort of a looking gentleman?" asked the man.

The little girl described Sleuth as he had appeared, and the man said:

"Who was the man?"

"A good friend of mine," answered the child.

"What is his name?"

"I do not know his name."

Sleuth was pleased. He saw that the child, even at the moment of her wonderment and distress, was cute and wary.

"I saw a gentleman here—yes."

"Where did he go?"

"Do you want to find him?"

"Yes; and I don't see where he went to. I just looked up there a moment, and when I turned he had gone away. Which way did he go?"

"The man was Sleuth the detective," came the answer, and "*He is here!*" came the added declaration.

CHAPTER II.

A BRIGHT look came to the little girl's face, and she clasped her hands gleefully and exclaimed:

"Oh, I know!"

"What do you know?"

"It's wonderful!" cried the child, testifying involuntarily to the great detective's skill as a transformist. "You have worked a change."

Sleuth laughed at the child's betrayal of a knowledge of the professional technical term.

"Little one," said the detective, "you are a very smart girl. Now listen: you must not call me Sleuth; you must never let any one guess who I am. You can say I am a missionary if any one asks you."

"Oh, I know," said the child.

The detective and the little girl resumed their journey toward the child's home. She led the officer along a few squares toward the river, and then came to a halt opposite a court, lined on either side by the walls of two great factories, while in the rear, and facing the court, appeared the glimmer of a light.

Sleuth knew the place; indeed there is not a section of the city that is not well known to him; and he remembered that at the termination of the court stood a dilapidated tenement-house, a place that in its time had been the scene of many a fight, and upon one occasion, many years ago, a terrible tragedy had occurred in the old place. It was rumored that it was haunted, and many families had moved suddenly out of the tenement, giving as a reason that they had seen strange sights and had heard strange noises.

The old house was part of an estate that was in litigation, or it would have been torn down, but the dispute as to title had resulted in its preservation; but, as Sleuth after learned, the matter had been settled, and the house was doomed, and the latter fact accounted for certain in-

cidents that were immediately brought to the detective's attention.

The child had come to a halt as she arrived opposite the court, and she glanced around furtively.

"What is the matter?" asked Sleuth.

"I'm looking to see if any of dem are around."

"Who?"

"The burglars."

"Is that where you live?"

"Yes."

"And who are the burglars?"

"Sister will tell you."

"We will go and see your sister."

The two moved along the court and soon passed beyond the line of light radiating from the street-lamp upon the sidewalk. The child moved very cautiously; the detective fell to the spirit of the strange adventure and also moved along cautiously, when suddenly there came a smothered scream from an upper room in the old house.

The child clutched the detective's hand convulsively, and in a low voice of terror, exclaimed:

"They're killing her! Come quick!"

The detective leaped forward; the scream did suggest the possibility that there was more in the adventure than he had at first supposed. He ran forward quickly, but the child glided even more rapidly and was ahead of him when they passed the entrance and reached the tumble-down stairs. The girl started to ascend, when Sleuth caught her and drew her back, and bending his lips to her ear, he whispered:

"Hold! come back! Some one is descending the stairs."

The detective had heard the old stairs creak, and he knew that some one was cautiously descending; and, drawing the child back, he said:

"You run back there in the hall. Do not move or speak, no matter what happens, until I speak to you, do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Remember, now, I am Sleuth; all will be well, but keep silent; even though some one is killed, don't scream until I tell you."

"Suppose you are killed?" asked the child.

"Never mind; do not move or speak, even if I am killed, unless I speak to you."

The child ran back in the hall, and Sleuth started to ascend the stairs, but he did not do so until his wonderful instincts informed him that a man was but a few steps above him. The latter had come to a halt, and Sleuth banged right into him, and at once there followed a series of oaths and curses, and a struggle, for Sleuth had seized the man, or rather the two men had made a joint attack.

The detective was a man of giant strength. He was yet under fifty, and his thighs and sinews were as firm and elastic as when he was but twenty. He was up to every trick in wrestling and sparring. Old Sleuth was an expert in every art, and at that moment hard to match either mentally or physically in the way of his singular peculiarities.

The detective got the best grip and dragged the man down the stairs, and together they reeled through the doorway to the road-way of the court, and then the stranger exclaimed:

"Let go of me! What the —— are you clinching with me for? Let go, I say, or I'll hurt you!"

"What did you catch hold of me for?" said Sleuth, as he backed the man toward the entrance to the court.

"It was you who clutched me," said the man.

"No, you got at me first," said Sleuth; and he kept backing the man toward the main sidewalk.

"Let go, I say!" cried the man.

"Yes, I will."

Sleuth had backed the fellow to the street and had him under the street-lamp, and managed to get a good square look at his face.

"Will you let go?" said the man.

"Certainly I'll let go."

Sleuth did let go his hold of the man, and at the same time asked him:

"What were you doing in that house?"

"What is that to you?"

"I am the agent of that property. I was going to call on one of my tenants when you grasped me by the throat."

"It's all right," said the man. "I was looking for a friend of mine whom I thought lived there."

"Oh, is that all? Well, all's well that ends well; but you're lucky."

"It's you who are lucky," retorted the man as he walked away.

Old Sleuth returned back to the entrance to the old house, and an instant later was again confronted by the little girl.

CHAPTER III.

SLEUTH always had a purpose when he made a move, and at the time he backed the man out to the street-lamp he had a design. As usual he desired to get a good square look at the fellow's face, and when the detective once got those terrible eyes of his fixed on a face the features were indelibly photographed upon his memory. He would know that man years afterward, and if he wanted him he would find him.

As described, after a good look at the fellow, he let him go and returned to where the little girl stood, and the latter at once exclaimed:

"That was one of them."

"Eh! what do you mean?" demanded Sleuth.

"You will understand when sister explains all to you; but we must hurry upstairs."

"Why didn't you go up before?"

"Oh, I was afraid to go! What will I do if sister is dead?"

"We will see," said Sleuth, and he followed the little girl up the stairs.

The latter was accustomed to ascending the rickety stairs, and besides, she was very eager, and she ran up ahead of the detective. A moment later there came a shrill scream, and the little girl, with a lamp in her hand, ran to the stairs, shouting:

"She's dead! She's dead! They've murdered her!"

Sleuth went up with a bound, and into the room on the top floor, the door of which was open, and there upon the floor, clearly revealed although in but a dim light, lay the form of a young girl.

"She's dead! She's dead!" murmured the little guide.

"Hold on and we will see," said Sleuth.

He caught the lamp from the child's hand and advanced and knelt over the prostrate form lying upon the floor.

One glance was sufficient. He saw that the young lady had only fainted, and he ordered his little guide to bring him some water. He applied the cooling liquid to the girl's brow, and kneeling down close to her face, holding the lamp so as to clearly see her features, he made a most strange and singular discovery.

The prostrate girl was plainly dressed, and looked like a very plain person, save that she possessed singularly regular features. Her complexion was "horrid," as the girls say: but the detective, upon a closer examination, made a startling discovery. He saw at a glance that the girl was *disguised*, and at the same instant he reached the conclusion that in fact she was very beautiful.

Sleuth continued his efforts to restore the disguised lady to consciousness. At length he had the satisfaction of seeing her move her lips and murmur, feebly:

"Maggie—Maggie!"

"She is not dead; she is calling me!" cried the little guide.

"Are you Maggie?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what is your sister's name?"

"Gussie."

After continued efforts on the part of the detective, Gussie opened her eyes. Sleuth had seen that she was about recovering, and he started up from beside her and caused Maggie to kneel in his place, and when the young lady's eyes opened fully they rested upon her little sister.

"Is it you, darling?"

"Yes, sister, I am here."

"Oh, Maggie, that man was here."

"Did he come?"

"Yes. You need not fear, sister. He has gone away, and Sleuth is here—Sleuth, the great detective."

Gussie raised up and exclaimed:

"What do you mean, Maggie?"

"You must not scold me, sister; but I brought him here."

"Brought who?"

"Sleuth, the great detective."

"Why did you bring any one here?"

"He will save you; he will not let the man kill you."

At that moment the girl's eyes fell upon the officer, and the color reddened her face, as she said:

"Maggie had no business to trouble you to come here."

In that kindly and reassuring voice which the great detective could assume when occasion required, he said:

"That is all right, my poor child; I wanted to come; your little sister is not to blame. Now come, sit up and tell me all about it."

Gussie did rise, with her little sister's assistance, and seated herself in a chair, but she did not speak, she merely looked around in a dazed sort of way.

"Come," said the detective, "tell me all about it."

"What shall I tell you, sir?"

Sleuth was a very cunning man, as our readers know, and he well knew how to get around to an object when he had a purpose in view, and he said:

"Do you know we found you lying insensible upon the floor?"

"Oh, I was so frightened!" cried the girl, involuntarily.

"What frightened you?" asked Sleuth.

The young girl cast down her head and appeared reluctant to speak, when Sleuth said:

"Come, do not fear, tell me what frightened you; I am your friend."

"You are a stranger to me, sir, and if Maggie asked you to come here she had no right to do so."

"It is well Maggie did ask me to come, for I met an evil fellow on the stairs, and we do not know what his purpose might have been."

"You did meet him?"

"Yes."

"Then I was not deceived," cried the girl. "I did see a face."

"Certainly you did; and now, tell me all about it, my child."

Sleuth spoke in a very kindly tone, and the girl said:

"I was sitting here alone when suddenly the door opened, and I looked over just in time to see the face of a man, and the next moment I knew nothing. If you met a man on the stairs I must have seen him."

"Why did you doubt having seen a man?"

"I have been so nervous lately. When I recovered, and when you asked me what had happened I thought that possibly my imagination had played me a trick."

"No; you undoubtedly saw the man's face, and Maggie and I heard you scream; and now, my dear child, you must tell me all about it—tell me why you feared this man; in deed, tell me your history."

"I feared him because I was alone in the house."

"No, no; you must not deceive me. You must tell me all, tell me the truth, for I know you have a reason for fearing the presence of this man. My child, you must confide in me."

The girl sat still, and did not answer.

CHAPTER IV.

"My child," said the detective, after waiting a moment, "you may as well tell me the truth; tell me all, for I know you have a revelation to make, and it may be that if you refuse to confide in me, you may, when it is too late, regret your lack of confidence."

"Tell him all, Gussie, and he will not let the bad men kill you."

The girl gave a start, and Sleuth quickly said:

"You hear. Maggie admits you have a revelation to make."

"I must have time to think, sir."

"No; you must tell me now; tell me all. Listen, I will tell you what I know. Maggie is not your sister."

Sleuth was a keen reader of physiognomies, and he had discovered that Maggie and Gussie were not sisters.

"No, Maggie is not my real sister, but I love her as much as though she were."

"How long has Maggie lived with you as your sister?"

"For three years."

"Come, tell me how you came to adopt Maggie as your sister."

The detective felt satisfied that if he could get the girl to tell her own story, he would succeed in gaining her full confidence.

"I do not like to tell the tale," said Gussie.

"Let me tell him all about it," cried Maggie.

"Yes," said Sleuth; "let Maggie tell me all about it."

There was great magnetism in Sleuth's presence. He had a wonderful way of winning confidences, and he was such a great, good-hearted man he inspired respect and trust almost immediately.

"Shall I tell him?" asked Gussie.

"Yes," answered Maggie, "tell him all. He will be your friend, and will not let the men hurt you, and he will find the treasure, and find out all about what the burglars were talking about, and he will see that the man who follows you does not follow you any more."

"Hush, Maggie!" cried the elder girl, in a terrified tone.

"No; I will not hush, Gussie. If you do not tell Sleuth all, I will tell him."

Sleuth desired to work toward the revelation gradually, and he said:

"Just tell me about your first meeting with Maggie."

The girl, who possessed a rich voice and a very charming manner, despite her seeming indigence, hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I was returning from work one cold, bitter winter's night when a little child, blue with the cold, in a feeble and pleading voice ran to me, and said:

"Come to my mamma. She is dying!"

"I did not hesitate a moment, but followed the child to a tenement-house, and I was led up several flights of stairs until ushered finally into a room on the top floor. On a miserable bed lay a woman evidently dying—yes, she was in the last stages of consumption—but she had strength enough to speak when I reached her bedside. She told me she was the widow of a soldier, that she had been cheated out of her pension by a man in whom she had confided. She said I would find some papers under her pillow, and she asked me to see that her child was put in some orphan asylum. She had but strength enough to give me some other directions and reveal to me a few other facts when she died. Poor little Maggie! her heart was broken, and I sought to console the child as best I could, when she threw her arms around my neck, and cried:

"Take me to your home; let me be your little child."

"In an instant I decided. I was myself an orphan; I had lived a lonely life; I determined to make a companion of Maggie, and I said to her:

"You shall be my sister," and ever since that time she has lived with me, and we call each other sister. She is a brave, good child, and I love her as dearly as though she really were my sister. I paid the expenses of her mother's funeral, and I have been amply repaid in holding the dear child's love. That is all, sir."

"I am very much obliged to you for telling me this story, and now tell me something about yourself."

"I have nothing to tell, sir."

"Ah, but Maggie has betrayed you."

"Maggie has a very lively imagination, sir. She imagines I am a great lady in disguise; but, sir, I am only a poor girl, born of humble parents—an orphan—left to earn my own subsistence by daily labor."

"I do not see why you refuse to have confidence in me."

"I have confided in you, sir. I can see you are a kindly gentleman, but I fear Maggie has unwittingly imposed upon you. Surely, sir, I have nothing to tell you."

"My child, listen to me. I am a detective. I have had great experience. I am not now in active employment, but I still enjoy doing detective work, and I do it without pay. Now listen. I may be of service to you if you will confide in me, and the service will not cost you anything. You need not fear me. I am an old man and well known indeed. I have a great reputation."

"I have heard about you, sir."

"Then you know you can trust me."

"But, sir, I have nothing to tell."

"I am disappointed," said Sleuth. "I had hoped you were a truthful young lady."

"I am, sir."

"And yet you tell me you have no revelation to make?"

"I have not, sir."

"My child, you compel me to tell you something. I do not do so with the purpose of annoying or alarming you, but you have a secret; I know it. There is a mystery connected with you—that I know also."

"As I said, sir, you have been misled by remarks made by Maggie, and her statements are founded upon creations of her own imagination."

"I know better," said the detective, in a decided tone.

The girl gave a start, and Sleuth added:

"I met a man on the stairway; I had a struggle with that man; I saw his face; it was the face of a villain. What was that man doing here?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Then why did his presence cause you to swoon away?"

"I am alone in this house, sir. The other tenants moved away a week ago. I intend to move away as the house is to be torn down. My month expires in three days, and the I shall move. It frightened me to see the man, and alone in the house."

"Very good; but now listen, miss. I still claim that you are withholding a revelation from me."

"Why do you so insist, sir?"

"Because you are disguised!" came the startling answer.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the detective uttered the words "You are disguised," the young lady gave a start; indeed, for a moment the detective feared she was about to go off in another fainting spell, and he hastened to reassure her, saying:

"You need not fear, I assure you. I am your friend, and it is fortunate this child brought me, for I am convinced a great peril threatens you, and why should you not trust me? I repeat, I am your friend."

"I never saw you until to-night, sir."

"I know that."

"Why should you be my friend?"

"I will tell you. I have had great experience. I know this world is full of crime and criminals; indeed, the true state of society is appalling to one who knows all that I do. I can not stop the great tide of evil that sweeps onward, but here and there I can snatch some poor innocent victim from the black, whirling current. I believe you to be an innocent girl. I believe danger threatens you—I believe evil persons meditate doing you harm. It will be a great pleasure to rescue you, and be of any other service that I can. You are not the first young person I have aided, and those whom I have protected heretofore were strangers to me, as you are, when I set out to do them a service."

The detective's words evidently made a deep impression upon the girl, and, after a moment's reflection, she said:

"Why do you suspect I am disguised?"

"I know you are."

"How did you discover it, sir?"

"It matters not how I discovered the fact; I am accustomed to such discoveries, however, and let me tell you your disguise takes the form of a disfigurement of your face. Will you tell me why you resorted to such an expedient?"

The girl did not answer, and the detective continued:

"Do not think me offensive, but you are a very good-looking young lady, or you would be if it were not for your voluntary disfigurement."

"I am a working-girl, sir."

"Yes, so I understand. Where do you work?"

"I am a lady compositor."

"And you have found it necessary to conceal your good looks?"

The girl again appeared lost in thought a few moments, and when she broke silence she spoke in a slow and hesitating manner.

"If you insist, sir, I will tell you my story."

"Yes; tell me your story."

"It is a terrible tale, sir."

"Tell me the story."

"My name is Augusta Thatford. My father lived in a lonely hut near the beach, down on Long Island. He pretended to be a fisherman, but I never knew him to apply himself to his occupation, and yet he appeared to have plenty of money. I recall this now, although I was but

seven years of age when the tragedy occurred which made me an orphan."

"Had you no mother?" demanded Sleuth.

"I never saw my mother, sir."

"Well, proceed."

"My father was certainly a man educated above his condition in life, for he devoted a great deal of time in instructing me and at the age of seven I was singularly well educated; I could read and write."

"Such precociousness is not of uncommon occurrence," said Sleuth. "I have frequently met children who could read and write at seven and eight."

"Yes, sir."

"Continue your narrative," said the detective.

"As I said, my father lived alone. There was no other residence within several miles of our hut, but I was very happy, however, with my father, as companion."

"Do you recall or remember whether your father was an American?"

"I think he was an American, as I recall a memory of him to-day."

"Proceed."

"My father often spoke as though he expected some one to come to him from over the sea. I did not pay much attention to the fact at the time, but within a few days I have had occasion to remember the incident; but the party never came, and who it was he expected I do not know."

"But you suspect?"

"I will first tell you my strange story, and then speak of what I suspect."

"Proceed."

"One night my father appeared to be very nervous and anxious. I remember it well, as I came to him several times to kiss him after starting for my little bed, and that was the last time I ever saw him alive."

The detective was deeply interested, and the girl, proceeding, said:

"I do not know what hour of the night it was I heard a voice at my bedside, but upon opening my eyes I saw a man standing over me with a mask on his face. I screamed, I remember also, when the man placed his hand over my mouth and bid me be still or he would strangle me. I was terrified and dared not scream again; and the man, who held a light in his hand, said:

"Get up, little girl, and dress yourself, something terrible has happened."

"The man placed the light on the table and left my room, and I got out of bed and commenced putting on my clothes. I seemed to be in a dream, and yet I vividly remember all that occurred on that fearful night."

"As soon as I was dressed the man entered the room and led me out, and as I glanced around our little sitting-room I saw my father lying on the floor. His eyes were starting from his head, his hands were uplifted and clinched, his face was ghastly white, and he lay motionless. I shall never forget that sight as long as I live."

"Did you know your father was dead?"

"I seemed to have an instinctive idea of the truth, and I would have gone to him, but the man in the mask led me across the room and through the door. It was a cold, rainy night, I remember, and I was wrapped in a blanket by a man who stood outside. He raised me in his arms and carried me along toward an inlet that ran in from the sea. The man did not speak. I was carried to a boat, which was moored to the shore in the creek. There were two men in the boat, and the man who had carried me said to them:

"Keep her until I return;" and I heard him whisper: "Be careful what you say. She is a very bright child, and may repeat all she hears."

"I do not know how long a time passed, but ere the morning light broke two men came to the boat. They carried with them a trunk, which was put in the boat. I had never seen the trunk before. As soon as the trunk was put in the boat the men rowed out to the sea, which was about a mile from where the boat had been moored, and soon the boat was run alongside a large vessel. I was lifted on to the deck, and taken to the cabin, and that is all I saw that night. The next morning when I was led on deck the vessel was far out on the sea, and—"

The girl's narrative was interrupted at this moment by the sound of footsteps outside the door.

CHAPTER VI.

THE moment the detective heard the step outside the door, he raised his hand warningly to the girl, and at the same moment quickly extinguished the lamp.

"Do not move," he said in a whisper; and quick as a flash he drew his ever-ready dark-lantern, and sliding the mask, flashed the light on a mere boy, who cowered at the foot of the steps.

"Halloo! What are you doing here?" demanded the detective.

"Nothing, sir."

"You were upstairs?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were you doing up there?"

"I was going to bunk up there till morning, sir."

"Well, you clear away with you; and if I catch you around here again I will hand you over to the police."

The boy darted away, and the detective was satisfied the little would-be bunker had told the truth. He returned upstairs, relighted the lamp, and reassured the two girls, telling them it was only a lad who thought the house was unoccupied, and then he said to Gussie:

"Proceed with your narrative; I am deeply interested."

Resuming her narrative, the girl said:

"Breakfast was given me, and the man who claimed to be captain of the vessel commenced asking me a great many questions, and then he told me that he was an old shipmate of my father's, and he said he had received a letter from my father asking him to come to him, as he desired to place his daughter in my charge. Your father," added the man, "must have known he was going to die."

"Is my father dead?" I asked.

"Yes. I found your father dead when I got there. He must have died in a fit. So all I could do was to take you in charge, and I will adopt you, as I thought a great deal of your father."

"I was too young to question or doubt the man's story; and he was very kind to me; indeed, he appeared to have learned to love me from the very start. The vessel sailed away over the sea. At first I was very sad, but I was so kindly treated, and so very young, I soon became resigned to my fate. I believed the story that had been told to me; I believed the man was really my father's friend, and his having said my father had died in a fit explained what I had seen as I passed through our little sitting-room on that terrible night."

"But how about the masked man, who stood beside your bed and awoke you that night?" asked Sleuth.

"I once asked my adopted father about that man in the mask, and he laughed and told me I was deceived, having just been awakened out of a sleep. He said there was no man in a mask that night."

"And you believed him?"

"Certainly. I was but a child, between seven and eight years of age, and, as I have said, I was kindly treated, and the man had won my confidence. I learned to believe all he said to me. I do not know how many days passed at sea, but one morning I came on deck and found the vessel at anchor in a river, and later on I was taken ashore by the man who called himself my adopted father, and I remember how he brought me to a neat little house, and presented me to a woman whom he called wife, and when she asked who I was and where I came from he took her to one side and talked to her. I did not hear what he said, but afterward she came to me, kissed me, and said I was her little daughter."

"Was she kind to you?"

"Yes, sir, as long as she lived she was like a mother to me, and my adopted father was very kind. The old trunk I had seen put in the boat on that fatal night I afterward saw up in the garret of the house, and one day I raised the lid and peeped in and saw that it was full of clothing and papers and little boxes; indeed it contained quite an assortment of curious things."

"Where is that trunk now?"

"I do not know; but I wish I had possession of those papers, for as I have told you so much I will also relate an extraordinary revelation that has come to me through Maggie."

"When I was twelve years of age my adopted mother died," continued Gussie, "and my adopted father appeared to mourn for her very much; but ere her death a very

strange incident occurred. She was sick a long time, and I was never allowed to be alone with her; but one afternoon I found the door of her room open. I looked in; there was no one there with her. She saw me from the bed and she beckoned me to enter the room. I did so, and she drew me down beside her on the bed and hurriedly whispered:

"Come and see me some time. Gussie. I have something to tell you; and when I am dead run away from your father, and—" She could not say more, as at that moment my adopted father came into the room. He spoke angrily to his wife as he bore me away in his arms. A few months after my adopted mother's death, my adopted father took me to the city of Philadelphia and placed me in an orphan asylum, and I have never seen him since."

"You have never seen him since?" cried Sleuth.

"No, sir."

"How long ago was it that you were placed in the asylum?"

"I was nearly twelve years of age when I was placed there, and I am now nineteen."

"Well, well," muttered the detective, "this is indeed an extraordinary tale."

"I have still more wonderful incidents to relate," said the girl.

CHAPTER VII.

RESUMING her story, the youthful narrator said:

"I remained in the asylum for two years, and received excellent instruction. I think I was quick to learn, and my teachers took special interest in me, as I was educated far beyond the established standard in the asylum. At the age of fourteen it was announced to me that I was to be bound out to a gentleman who had visited the asylum and had seen me. The proposition filled me with terror. I had become quite a reader, and managed to get hold of books unknown to the matron, and I had learned a great deal from my readings. I resolved to run away and start in the world for myself, and I was aided by a young girl who was a maid in the asylum. She had formed a great friendship for me, and she loaned me money and clothes, and I agreed to correspond with her secretly if I succeeded in escaping."

"What has become of the girl who aided you to escape?" asked Sleuth.

"She is married now and lives in Philadelphia; and I still correspond with her."

"Proceed."

"When I escaped I came right on to New York, and I was very fortunate from the start. There was a lady on the train who had a little girl with her, and I took quite a fancy to the child and amused her during the trip. The lady made my acquaintance and asked me a great many questions, and I told her I was going to the city to secure a place as child's nurse. She asked me if I had references, and I showed her a reference my friend had given me, and the result was I assumed my friend's name and was engaged as the child's nurse. I remained with the lady two years, and during that time saved every penny of my money. Her husband was a printer, and when I told the lady I proposed to go away and learn a trade she repeated what I had said to her husband, and he proposed that I should learn to be a compositor. I learned very fast, and soon became quite an expert compositor."

"You are a very brave and deserving girl," said the detective.

"It was necessary that I should earn my living, and I did."

"Are you still in the shop with your friend?"

"No, sir."

"Why did you leave him?"

"I come to that now, sir. I kept my promise, and did furnish my address to my friend, who is now Mrs. Bland, and I corresponded with her for some months, when one day I received a letter from her, saying that there had been inquiries for me at the asylum. A man had come to the matron and had offered large sums of money to gain any information concerning me. The matron was suspicious, and led the man along until she could learn something about him. She employed a detective, and learned that the man who was seeking me was a notorious criminal, and she gave him no information. Mrs. Bland wrote to me to

be careful, for she had heard facts that led her to believe the man who was searching for me had an evil purpose."

"Did you ever see this man?"

"No, sir; but it appears that in some way he must have traced me up, for my employer one day called me into his office and asked me certain questions, and from his questions I learned that some one was on my track. I evaded all my friend's questions, and never appeared in his shop again. I left without any warning, and secured a position in another shop; and in order to hide from this man, whoever he may be, I disguised myself, and I have lived in tenement-houses, where I would be less likely to be discovered."

"Why have you hidden from this man?"

"I will tell you, sir. After I grew older I thought over a great many incidents in my early life, and I reached the conclusion that my poor old father was murdered on that fatal night when he was said to have died in a fit; and later on I procured proofs that he was really murdered."

"How?"

"In a most singular manner. One day I read in the paper about a crime that had been committed, and in the account it was stated that a similar crime was committed on the same spot some years previously, when old Thatford was most mysteriously murdered. I recognized the name, and as the papers stated the locality, I went down on Long Island to the place, and the place was familiar to me. The house was still standing where I had lived with my old father. I remembered the place well, and I made a great many inquiries and learned that old Thatford, as he was called, was found murdered one morning, and his child—a little girl—was carried away; and it was also stated and believed that my father was a miser and had a great deal of money in his possession, and that he was murdered for his money, as those around asserted. Indeed, I learned facts that fully convinced me that the traditions were partly true; and I was able, with what facts I had gained down near my old home, to make out quite a tragic series of incidents by adding other facts following the events of that terrible night."

"You are quite a detective," said Sleuth.

"I did not stop my detective work there," continued the girl. "I took a week's vacation, and visited my home down in New Jersey, where I had lived with my adopted father, and there I learned facts of the most startling character. I learned that the man who represented himself as the friend of my father was a bad character. His neighbors suspected him of being a smuggler, and it was stated that in his earlier years he had been a slave-trader; but all these facts were discovered after he had married a fisherman's daughter, born in the town by the sea-shore where this man came and settled. I learned that after his marriage he became very poor and laid around drunk all the time, but that suddenly one day he disappeared and was gone away two weeks, and when he returned he brought a little girl with him; that he from that time had plenty of money, and gave out that his brother had died, making him his heir and the guardian of his child. Later on it was said his wife died and he went away, and that after he had gone away rumors were rife that his wife had learned some terrible secret, that she was an honest woman, and that, fearing she would reveal his secret, he had poisoned her and had cleared out with the child, and had never been seen since."

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING proceeded so far with her narrative as recorded to the close of our preceding chapter, the narrator suddenly stopped short and looked around in a furtive manner.

"I heard a noise," she said.

"Oh, it's nothing," said the detective; "only a rat. I've heard the noise for some time. Proceed with your strange story."

After a moment the girl resumed, and said:

"As I proceeded in my investigations I was enabled to supply facts to facts, and managed to make out quite a well-connected narrative of a dark and terrible crime."

"Do you think the man who is searching for you is the man who proclaimed himself your adopted father?"

"No; he is not the man. I always thought he was the man, but within a few hours I have learned the contrary."

"Have you established the identity of the man who is pursuing you?"

"I have not established his identity, but I have learned enough to establish the fact that the man who is on my track is not the man who committed the murder. The man who claimed me as his adopted daughter I have reason to believe is dead."

"You believe he is dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had you learned those facts before you were questioned by your employer with whom you learned your trade?"

"Yes, sir; and that is the reason why I fled away and went into hiding."

"But you found Maggie three years ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"At that time you were living with your employer?"

"No, sir; I only resided with him six months after I had commenced learning my trade. When I adopted Maggie as my sister I set up in rooms by myself."

"Ah, I see," said the detective; "and now proceed."

"Last night there was a meeting between three burglars down-stairs."

"A meeting between three burglars?" exclaimed the detective.

"Yes, sir; and little Maggie here proved herself to be a little heroine, and one of the bravest little girls in New York, and, strangely enough, my name was mixed up in the conversation between those three men."

"I am amazed," said Sleuth.

"You will be still more amazed, sir, when I tell my startling narrative and relate Maggie's thrilling experience; and I will add that those men confirmed the fact that the old man whom I believed to be my father was really murdered."

"Then old Thatford was not your father?"

"I always believed him to be my father until Maggie overheard the talk between the three burglars."

"Proceed; I am impatient to learn the facts."

The girl was about to proceed when suddenly the door of the room opened, a man stepped over the threshold, and in a rough voice he asked:

"Where are the people who used to live on the floor below?"

Sleuth was surprised. The man had evidently ascended the stairs and had reached the room without having been heard, and how much he had overheard was a question.

The fact was, Sleuth had been so deeply interested in the narrative of Gussie, and she had been so absorbed in the telling of her story, neither had heard a step.

Sleuth glanced at the man and discerned instantly that his question was a "guy."

"Are you looking for the family who used to live down-stairs?" asked the detective.

"Yes, I am."

"Which family do you wish to find?" asked the detective.

"The family that used to live in the rooms below, I said. Is not that plain enough?"

"You need not get so huffy about it," said Sleuth.

Our hero had the appearance of a poor old man. He had assumed that as a disguise when he worked his transform before reaching the tenement-house under Maggie's guidance.

"This is the third time I'm telling you I want to find the family that used to live on the floor below."

"What family?" persisted Sleuth.

The man looked confused, but said:

"Hang it! can't you understand English?"

"Yes."

"Well, there used to live a family on the floor below, didn't there?"

"Yes."

"That's the family I want to find."

"Which one?" again asked Sleuth.

"You're guying me."

"No, I am not. Now see here; what is the name of the family you want to find?"

"What business is it of yours?"

"There were two families. How can we tell which one you want to find?"

"See here, old man, it's my idea that you're very insulting."

"Well."

"I don't like the way you talk. What are you doing here anyhow?"

"Is that your business?"

"Yes, it is."

As the man spoke he made a step toward Sleuth, and glancing closely at Gussie at the same instant, he remarked:

"I think I've seen you afore, young gal."

Gussie rose to her feet in terror, and would have run from the room, when Sleuth stepped forward, and seizing her arm, said:

"Wait, my child, I will turn this ruffian out."

CHAPTER IX.

THE great detective saw that the man was only foraging around. He was merely on an information "lay," seeking to pick up a few points for some one else.

"Sit down, my child," he continued, addressing Gussie, "and I will see what this man is up to. He will make his business known or 'git'—that's all."

There came an ugly grin to the man's face as he surveyed the seeming old man over and over, and he said, in a sneering tone:

"You're quite a protector of a fellow, ain't you?"

"I think you're drunk," said Sleuth, "and you've no business here."

"Ah! go long, or I'll h'ist you out of the room. You just 'git.' I've got some business with this 'ere gal, and it don't concern you. So you just run home to your old wife. 'Git,' I say, or I'll h'ist yer—yes, yes, I will."

The old-time smile came to Sleuth's face as he advanced toward the man, and said:

"You're drunk, I tell you."

"Am I?"

"Yes."

The man leaped forward and made an attempt to seize hold of the detective, when the latter shot his arm forward and the fellow went reeling. Sleuth did not appear to make the least effort. It was a short-arm thrust, but, as the boys say, it was a "stinger," and it knocked the ruffian clean over. The fellow quickly sprung to his feet, and a more amazed man never recovered from a sudden blow.

Sleuth had, for reasons, assumed the disguise of an old man. It was his favorite rôle; he could play it well, and it enabled him to work his plans as a rule, with greater nicety.

As stated, the ruffian was amazed. He had looked upon the detective as a feeble old fellow, whom he could thrust aside as he would a child, and, lo! he had himself been brushed aside as though he were a fly. The man for a moment did not speak; but at length he said:

"For an old fellow, you're a good 'un!"

"My friend," said the detective, "I don't think you have any business with me."

"Hang me if I ain't reached that conclusion myself!"

"You had better leave."

"I guess I will."

"Go!"

The man moved toward the door as the detective advanced a step toward him.

"I'm going," he said.

The fellow reached the door, backed out, and disappeared; and Sleuth, turning to Gussie, said:

"It seems that I am just in time, as my friend Phil Tremaine sometimes remarks."

"It is fortunate for me, sir, that you are here."

"What do those men want?"

"I do not know, but I fear they mean some evil to me."

"You have grounds for your suspicion?"

"Yes, sir."

"Proceed and tell me. Finish your narrative. You were telling me that Maggie overheard a conversation."

"It is a remarkable story, sir, and you may not believe it."

"I am prepared to believe a great deal after what you have told me."

"It is a tale of buried treasure."

"Indeed?"

"According to what Maggie overheard, the treasure belongs to me."

"We can judge of that when you tell me your story."

"Last night, sir," began the girl, "Maggie went to the store to make a purchase for me. As she was returning

she saw a light in the lower room. She knew the room had been vacated, as the house is to be torn down. Her curiosity was excited, and she stole around to the rear door and entered the room."

"She was a brave little girl," remarked Sleuth.

"Yes, sir; she showed great courage, as you will learn. Upon entering the room she beheld three men seated at a table, which had evidently been left in the room, and the men had made two benches, on which they sat. On the table was a candle, and the men were drinking from a bottle."

"What made Maggie think they were burglars?"

"From a remark that fell from the lips of one of them, who said:

"I tell you, boys, this is a big room, but it is getting too small for us. That last job of ours is making considerable noise, and the police are going to get down to work, and the first thing we know we'll be 'nipped.'"

"Maggie overheard them say that?"

"Yes."

There came a thoughtful look to Sleuth's face. He knew that several daring robberies had taken place, and the burglars in one instance had nearly killed a gentleman who had detected them in his house.

"Proceed with your story," said the detective, after a moment's thought.

"When Maggie heard the man speak the words I have repeated she became alarmed. She at once concluded that they were burglars, and she was about to crawl out of the room, when she overheard a remark that caused her to remain, as one of the men said:

"I tell you, lads, if I could find a certain gal named Gussie Thatford I'd give you all a fortune, and we could retire from business."

"They mentioned your name?" said Sleuth.

"Yes, sir; and when Maggie heard my name mentioned she was amazed, and determined at all hazards to remain and hear what more the man had to say, and her courage was rewarded by overhearing, as I have intimated, a remarkable narrative. The man who had mentioned my name continued and said:

"You remember the Thatford murder?" The two men nodded their heads affirmatively, and the burglar continued: 'You remember the little girl?'

"One of the men said:

"I remember there was a little girl that was carried away that night. What became of her?"

"Old Seth Black took the gal," the man answered; and the other remarked:

"He was a sly old cuss; but he's chipped me in, I believe."

"Yes," answered the first speaker.

"And what about the gal—what became of her?"

"That's what we don't know; but I've been looking for the gal, and, between you and me, lads, I think I'm on her track. There was a gal escaped from an asylum in Philadelphia, and she took the name of one of the nurses. She came on to New York, and went to work as a child's nurse; and then she learned the printer's trade, and she has been living in New York ever since."

"But what has the gal who ran away from the asylum to do with Gussie Thatford?" asked one of the men.

"Ah!" answered the man who had started in to tell the narrative. "I've pretty good proof that the gal who ran away from the asylum and Gussie Thatford are one and the same."

"How was Maggie able to recollect all this conversation?" asked Sleuth.

"Maggie has a most excellent memory."

Turning to Maggie, the detective asked:

"Did you remember all that was said?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"And did you see the men's faces?"

"I did."

"And will you know them when you see them again?"

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Proceed with your story," said Sleuth.

"I will not attempt to repeat word for word all that passed; I will just give the outlines of the burglar's narrative."

"Then he did explain just what he meant?"

"Yes, sir; and I will now tell you his story."

"Yes; proceed and tell me the burglar's story."

CHAPTER X.

To relieve our readers of any weariness, we will condense the strange story told by the burglar. From what he stated to his companions, Maggie was enabled to gather the following facts:

Old Thatford was a seaman; he had been a sailor from early boyhood, and had sailed the world over in various ships, and among his shipmates was a man named Seth Black. Twenty years previous to the opening of our narrative Seth Black and old Thatford were in the same ship. Thatford was mate of the vessel, and when the ship had been a few days at sea it was rumored that her cargo was principally treasure that had been accumulated by one of the passengers, an American, who had lived many years in Australia. It was at Melbourne that the passenger had come aboard, and there had been considerable mystery in the taking of the cargo.

The captain of the vessel was a brave and honorable man—a man who could keep his own counsel. The reputed owner of the treasure was a middle-aged man, who was reported to have lost his wife through death a few weeks previous to the sailing of the ship, and when he came aboard he brought an infant child, who was cared for by a nurse, an elderly woman well adapted to her duties.

When the vessel was a month out Thatford discovered that Seth Black had been among the crew and had induced the majority of them to join in a plan to mutiny and a conspiracy to murder the captain and the passengers—there being two of the latter besides the reputed owner of the treasure, and his child and the nurse. Thatford also learned that the men determined to murder all the officers of the ship except himself, the first mate. It was a boy on the ship who had learned of the conspiracy and who had reported the intended mutiny to the mate. When Thatford learned of the facts he at once went to the cabin and reported to the captain, and advised that immediate measures be taken to beat the scheme of the mutineers.

As events proved, Thatford's advice was the best. His prophecy proved correct, and the delay cost the captain, the passengers, and all the officers of the vessel, save Thatford, their lives.

Upon the night following the mate's discovery, the men suddenly rose in mutiny. A desperate fight followed, but the mutineers outnumbered the officers of the ship and the few men who were not in the conspiracy, and every man was murdered who was not with the assassins, and the latter were soon in possession of the ship.

For some strange reason the mate's life had been spared, as Black was fully capable of sailing the vessel; still, orders had been issued that he should not be killed. He was seized before the fight commenced, and bound and gagged, and when released Black was in command of the vessel.

The triumph of the mutineers, however, was but short-lived; for within two hours after the outbreak of the mutiny, and before the bodies of the victims had all been cast into the sea, a man-of-war was seen bearing down upon the ship. Indeed, a fog had prevailed, and the man-of-war was almost within hailing distance when discovered. The men were seized with a wild fear, and they took to the boats, every man of them, and pulled away from the ship.

Thatford had managed, in the confusion, to escape observation, and remained on the ship; and a few moments later the fog, which for a short time had cleared away, settled down again thick and impenetrable, and the man-of-war was lost to view. So also were the men who had run off in the boats, and the good ship sailed along with a crew of one man only. Night fell over the waters, and all Thatford could do was to stand at the helm of the little brig and let her sail. And so through the night she kept upon her way, with the solitary man aboard of her at the helm to keep her up steady as she glided along.

The day following the fog cleared, and, as good luck would have it, Thatford discovered a sail. His signal was seen, and the two vessels headed for each other.

Again good luck fell to the lot of Thatford, as a dead calm settled over the sea, and a boat was sent from the vessel he had met. Thatford was overjoyed to recognize in the man commanding the boat an old shipmate.

The men from the boat boarded the abandoned ship, and were welcomed by Thatford, who told his story.

He did not mention, however, the fact of the treasure being on the vessel. He merely told the story of the

mutiny, and the boat returned to the other ship, and the man reported all that he had learned from Thatford.

It was a remarkable tale, but there were evidences of its truth, and, after due consideration, the captain of the friendly ship determined to send a few men on board to navigate the brig, it being arranged that Thatford should act as captain.

The men were put on board, and the brig was headed for San Francisco, although her original destination had been direct to New York.

While the men were reporting to their captain, Thatford descended to the cabin of the brig, when he was attracted by the cry of a child, and then there flashed over his mind a recollection of the nurse and babe. He found the surviving passengers. The child was about eighteen months old. As it turned out, the terror and shock of the mutiny had brought on a brain attack, and when the nurse was found she was dying, and indeed while Thatford stood by her side she breathed her last, and the old seaman was left in charge of the infant.

Thatford was a kind-hearted man, and he determined to save the child's life, and at once fed the little orphan, and soon gladly saw it fall away to sleep.

The crew from the other vessel came aboard, and in due time the brig reached San Francisco, and news of its arrival was telegraphed to the New York consignees.

Thus far Maggie heard the strange narrative, but just as the burglar reached that part of his narrative, there came an interruption, and Maggie heard no more.

Old Sleuth had listened to the extraordinary story with a feeling of deep interest, and when the girl concluded her statement, he said:

"This is a wonderful story, and you must let me think it over."

CHAPTER XI.

SLEUTH sat for some time thinking over the strange story he had heard, but at length he said:

"I am astonished, as I said before, that a child like Maggie should be able to recollect all she heard."

"The incidents are so tragic," said Gussie, "I do not think it strange."

"You have told me all she heard?"

"Yes."

"Had the burglar concluded his story, or did the interruption cause him to postpone it?"

"I think the interruption caused him to postpone it, sir."

"He gave no intimation as to what became of the treasure?"

"No, sir."

"There is no positive proof that there was any treasure on the ship?"

"No, sir."

"But there is an indication," said Sleuth, "from the fact that old Thatford was murdered, and also from the fact that the men are looking for you."

"I have merely related to you what Maggie heard."

"Your name was mentioned?"

"Yes, sir."

"And if the burglar's narrative was a true one, the indications are that you are the child of the passenger who was the owner of the treasure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Seth Black was the name of the man who took care of you after the death of old Thatford?"

"Yes, sir."

"And old Thatford was the man whom you always supposed to be your father?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he was murdered?"

"There is no doubt of the fact that old Thatford was murdered."

"And Seth Black was the murderer?"

"I have every reason to believe that he was the murderer."

"He is dead?"

"So it is said."

"Has Maggie ever seen the man since who told the story?"

"No, sir."

Turning to the child, the detective asked:

"Would you know the man if you were to see him?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had a good look at him?"

"Yes, sir."

"How old a man do you think he is?"

"Less than fifty."

"Was the man who was in the room to-night one of the three men?"

"No, sir."

"Did you see the man with whom I had the scuffle when we first came here?"

"No, sir; I did not see his face."

"What was it caused the burglar to end his story so abruptly?"

"Another man came into the room."

"And from what you saw, they did not want him to hear the story?"

"That is what I think, sir."

"Did the men say anything that led you to think they knew your sister was in this house?"

"No, sir."

"And they had no suspicion of your presence?"

"No, sir."

"What did they say that leads you to think they meant to murder your sister?"

"The man who told the story, before commencing his narrative, said he would settle her if he found her."

Again the detective sat for some time lost in deep thought, and when he broke silence he said:

"My child, there is no doubt but these men, for some reason, intend to take your life."

Gussie shuddered, but made no answer; and the detective added:

"I propose to take up your case. I propose to solve this mystery. There may be something in the burglar's narrative, and there may not. I am inclined to think it was a true story he told, and it is possible that there is somewhere a large amount of hidden treasure that really belongs to you."

"I care not for the treasure," said the girl.

"You care not for the treasure?"

"No, sir."

"What do you care for, my child?"

"I do not fancy being pursued by these bad men."

"You need not fear these bad men. You are now under my care. I will see to it that these men do you no harm."

"You are very kind, sir, but I can not become a burden upon you. But you can do me a kind service."

"I can do you a kind service?"

"Yes, sir."

"How?"

"I am determined to leave New York."

"Why will you leave New York?"

"To escape those men."

"Where will you go?"

"I have not decided."

"You fear they will find you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Listen, my child. They have a purpose in finding you."

"It so appears."

"And you have no desire to find the treasure?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"It would prove a useless search."

"I do not think so, my child. Listen to me. I am an old man and I have had a great deal of experience. There may be something in that man's narrative, or there may not be. I am determined to find out."

"How can you, sir?"

"Ah, that is a matter I must settle in the near future. In the meantime you must act under my advice until my investigations are concluded. If there is a fortune belonging to you somewhere, we will find it. If there is no fortune, then you can decide upon your course; but either way I am your friend, and you must follow my advice. I will take you to my home; there you will be safe while I am looking into this matter."

"I can not leave Maggie, sir."

"I do not mean that you shall leave Maggie. She is too good and brave a girl to be left. But just mark my

words. Suppose you do come into a fortune, how much you can do for Maggie!"

"Alas, sir! I do not believe there is a fortune. Whatever fortune there might be has already been secured by these men."

"That is possible; and yet there are some features in case that lead me to believe that possibly the bulk of the fortune is yet to be secured."

"You are very kind, sir, to take such an interest in my affairs, but I fear it will be time lost."

"Leave it all to me; I will take the responsibility," said Sleuth.

CHAPTER XII.

GUSSIE THATFORD was a brave, self-reliant girl, and until within a few hours she had not attached as much importance to the narrative Maggie overheard as its remarkable incidents warranted. She had thought the story over after it had been repeated to her by Maggie, and not for one moment did she look upon herself as an heiress; but the words of the detective made a deep impression upon her mind, and yet she did not feel that she could permit the officer to interest himself in her behalf; but when Old Sleuth proved so persistent, she was inclined to look favorably upon his proposition; still she felt induced to say:

"Suppose, sir, it shall prove time lost to you?"

"I am prepared to lose the time."

"Who will pay you for all the trouble?"

"I am not looking for pay; I do not need pay. I am deeply interested in this case; it may prove the greatest case of my life, and you must know I have been engaged in some very remarkable cases."

"I do not see, sir, where you will commence."

"No! It would be strange if you did; you are not a detective; but I know just where to commence, and in the first go Maggie shall be my aid. She shall identify the burglar who was telling the narrative. And now listen to me: You must remove to my house and let me place you under the care of my wife; and under my roof you will be safe."

"But, sir, I must have time to pack up my things if I am to go to your home."

The real truth is, Gussie, as she afterward confessed, had no intention of becoming an inmate of the great detective's home; but Sleuth, who was a man who could see very far ahead, was not the man to be baffled.

"You will turn your key in the door, and come with me," said Sleuth.

"But, sir!" exclaimed the girl.

"Well, what is it?"

"You forget, sir."

"Forget what?"

"I am disguised."

"You admit it?"

"Yes, sir; and after all you know there is no need for me to offer an explanation."

"No, my dear child, there is no need for you to offer an explanation; and your being under a disguise is a fortunate circumstance."

"But what will your wife say, sir?"

"I will explain as far as is necessary to Mrs. Loveland."

"You will explain to whom, sir?"

"Ah, you do not know. I am known professionally as Mr. Sleuth; but Sleuth is only a name my old professional companions gave me years ago. And now come, we will go at once."

The girl hesitated and blushed, and the detective observed there was something she desired to say, and he encouraged her with the remark:

"Well, what is it?"

"I was thinking, sir—" Again the girl hesitated.

"Proceed."

"Would it not be well for me to remove the disguise?"

"Yes, it will be as well under all the circumstances."

"And there is one more thing I'd like to say, sir."

"Proceed."

"You will please remember that I am only acceding to your request in permitting you to take me to your home, and also in permitting you to interest yourself in my affairs."

"That is all right, my child; I fully understand."

"And further, sir: under no circumstances must I be separated from Maggie."

"There is no reason why you should be separated from Maggie."

"Will you wait for me, sir?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Sleuth, with a pleasant laugh as he started to leave the room.

The detective left the room. An hour passed ere the door opened and he was bidden to re-enter the room. As the detective obeyed and his eyes fell upon the transformed girl, an involuntary cry of astonishment fell from his lips.

When he had first entered the room he had beheld lying upon the floor what appeared to be a very common-looking female. As our readers will remember, he almost immediately detected that the girl was disguised, and that she was a better-looking young lady than she appeared; but he was not prepared for the apparition of beauty that met him as he re-entered the apartment, for before him appeared a really beautiful girl, neatly and becomingly dressed.

When the detective had somewhat recovered from his first feeling of surprise, he ejaculated:

"Well, I declare!"

"I am ready, sir," said the girl.

Maggie, also, had undergone a transform, and she was quite a presentable and pretty little lady in her plain but neat clothes.

"I am not surprised," said the detective, meditatively, "that you found it necessary to hide your beauty."

"We will not speak of it, sir."

"But listen to me: when did you first go under a disguise?"

"When I left the service of the gentleman with whom I learned my trade."

"Then he knows you as you appear now?"

"Yes, sir."

"But in the shop where you were last employed you are only known as you appeared when I first beheld you?"

"Yes, sir."

Again the detective indulged one of his thinking spells, but soon asked:

"Where is your key?"

"Here it is, sir."

"We will go. And now, my dear child, remember you are under my care. You are to follow my advice and trust all to me—never fearing, never doubting—and either way I will see that our meeting results in benefit and safety to you and Maggie."

The door was locked. The trio started forth.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUSSIE THATFORD was duly introduced to the detective's wife, a lovely lady, whose history is well known to those of our readers who read the narrative of the "Bay Ridge Mystery," published many years ago. All the circumstances were fully explained by the detective, and Gussie Thatford and Maggie were made to feel that they were indeed in the house of friends.

On the day following the incidents we have recorded, the great mystery solver and criminal trailer started out to strike a trail; and when Old Sleuth started "points" he generally "got there," as our readers well know.

The detective knew better than any man in New York the haunts and habits of the criminal classes, and he had reached the conclusion that the man with whom he had had the scuffle in the court where the old tenement stood was the burglar who had related the remarkable narrative to his companions. The detective at all hazards, determined to get upon the trail of this man. He had a long talk with Maggie, and had got the man's description, and it was from what Maggie said he arrived at the conclusion that he would enjoy a "run in" with the burglar narrator.

It was well on toward midday when the detective saw a man saunter down the court, at the end of which stood the old tenement, and the moment Sleuth's eyes fell on the fellow he muttered:

"There's my man!"

The detective had recognized the fellow as the man whose face he had "collared" under the gas-light, and as his game went down the court the detective followed him with his glance, until he saw the man go into the tenement.

Some time passed, and the man came forth, and Sleuth lay low, and the fellow passed close to the detective, lost in a brown study, and he muttered, when close to the officer:

"Hang it! I want to see that gal. It would prove strange if I were to stumble right on to her."

Again the detective mentally exclaimed:

"He's my man, by ginger!"

The man started down the street, and Sleuth followed at a safe distance until both had passed the corner of the intersecting street, when the detective whistled, as though signaling for a dog, and a little ragged girl answered the call instead of the dog.

"Do you see that man going down the street, Maggie?"

"That's him, sir."

"You are sure?"

"I can't mistake him—that's the man, sir."

"Have you seen any of the others?"

"No, sir; but that man was up to our room."

"Did he enter the old house?"

"Yes, sir; and he went up to our room and tried the door."

"How do you know?"

"I ran round to the house in the rear and I saw him through the window. You know there is a window at the end of the hall in the old house."

"And you saw him try the door?"

"I did."

"Did he attempt to force it?"

"No, sir."

"Well, that is all I want of you to-day, little girl. You go home, stay in the house, and say nothing to any one."

"Not to sister?"

"No, not to sister. I will make all explanations."

The child skipped away, and the detective started to follow the burglar story-teller. The latter walked very slowly, and when down near the river entered a low drinking-place; and a few moments later the detective also rolled into the place—we say rolled, for he had assumed the disguise of an old sailor—and, always up to his rôle, he struck the sea-dog's rolling gait.

The burglar had seated himself at a table, and had called for a drink, and the detective sat down at another table and, also calling for a drink, fixed his eyes on his man. Some minutes passed; the watched man became conscious that he was being pretty closely scanned, and he thought to throw off the other's gaze by flinging back a savage glance; but Old Sleuth just kept his eyes fixed on the fellow, until the latter exclaimed:

"Look here, old man, I reckon you'll know me when you see me again."

"That's what I want to do," came the answer.

"Well, you just take your glance off me, will you?"

"No."

The detective looked like a very old man, and his boldness was characteristic.

"What are you looking at me so sharply for, anyhow?" demanded the man.

"I ain't hurting you, am I?"

"Yes, you are."

"Hurting your feelings, I suppose."

"You annoy me."

"Sorry, but I can't help it."

The man's eyes began to brighten with anger, and his face reddened, as he asked:

"What are you looking at me for, anyhow; will you tell me?"

"No."

"Are you crazy?"

"A little."

"I should think you were."

"They call me crazy, my shipmates do—yes, sir; and sentimentally I may be, but when it comes to the business of the ship I'm there every time, and they know it."

"What ship are you on?"

"No ship now; I'm taking a vacation ashore."

"Where did you sail from last?"

"Liverpool; and now see here, shipmate, didn't you follow the sea once?"

"Yes, I did."

"I thought so."

"Well, what of it?"

"That's why I'm looking at you, that's all."

"You and I never met before."

"That may be so; but I think we have met, shipmate." Sleuth was playing an old-time game.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE man appeared to be greatly amazed, and suddenly he rose from his seat, crossed over to where the detective sat, fixed his eyes upon the pretended old sailor, and eying him closely and well, said, at length:

"No, sir, I never met you before—that settles it."

"Well, now, see here," said Sleuth; "you don't remember?"

"No, I never saw you."

"That's possible, but it don't change it."

"Don't change what?"

"The fact."

"What fact?"

"That I believe I've seen you before."

"You never saw me."

"That's possible; but, now, see here. I'm an old man. I've been around the world a great many times, and strange things have come to my knowledge. I've a wonderful memory, I have, and it strikes me that I've seen you before, although you've grown a good many years older. I'm a daisy, though, shipmate, in getting down on old faces."

"And you think you've seen me before?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"In Melbourne, nigh on to eighteen or nineteen years ago."

The man gave a start.

"You think you saw me in Melbourne, eh?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances?"

"Well, I'll tell you. You were with an old shipmate of mine. I spoke to him, but not to you. I saw you, but may be you didn't look at me."

"What is the name of the man I was with?"

"Well, there you've kinder got me. You see, I'm all right on facts, faces, and incidents, but when it comes to remembering names I'm weak—yes, my memory goes back on me, and that's why I was looking at you so sharp. I'd an idea that by looking at you I might recall the name of my old shipmate, and I want to ask about him, as may be you've seen him since, for I've never seen him since that day but once."

"Can't you remember his name?"

"Let me see," said Sleuth, in a thoughtful manner. "A B C D E F—Oh, hang it! Sometimes I get names by going over the alphabet, but I can't somehow get on to the name of the man I saw in Melbourne."

"Was it Brown?" demanded the man.

"No, sir; it was not Brown, but I've got it now—you just gave me the clew—it's Black, that's what his name was—yes, Seth Black; and he was a good sailor."

"So you knew Seth Black?"

"Yes; and weren't you with him in Australia?"

"Yes, I was; but I do not remember being ashore with him; but it was a good many years ago. Do you remember the name of the vessel Black was attached to at the time?"

"No, I do not remember her name, but it strikes me it was a brig I heard him say."

"Did he ever tell you what became of the brig?"

"Yes."

"Did he tell you anything that happened during that voyage?"

"Yes. But see here, what has become of Black?"

"He's dead."

Sleuth fell off seemingly into a fit of reflection, and his actions were perfect as intending to deceive. Indeed, he was playing his game well. He was a fine player when on a "lay." After a long reflection, as it appeared, the detective said:

"I could tell you some pretty tall tales about old Seth. We were on a slaver together."

Sleuth lowered his voice as he spoke. He had struck the slaver business at random on a mere chance, but, as it happened, he struck it well.

"I'd heard old Seth had been on a slaver," said the man.

"What may your name be?" asked Sleuth.

"My name is Bigelow."

"Bigelow," repeated Sleuth, reflectively. "I never heard it—no. But you were a friend of old Seth Black's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, give us your paw, old man; I'm glad to meet you. Let's grog it together, eh?"

Drinks were ordered for the two men, and Sleuth kept repeating, "So old Seth is dead. Well, well! I suppose it will be my turn some day. I tell you, Bigelow, Seth was a schemer. He was"—Sleuth lowered his voice to a whisper, and continued—"he was a great fellow. He always had it in his mind to mutiny. He wanted to command a ship; and, as he could run one, he always had it in his mind to take command, and once he came pretty near doing it. You see, he persuaded me to head the affair, but we never got the first blow struck, and it went through."

"You say that you saw Seth once?"

"Yes."

"Where did you see him?"

"In Philadelphia; and he had some wild scheme in his head then. But he was so drunk at the time I did not pay much attention to him. He was talking about some hidden treasure and other nonsense, and I did not pay much attention, you see, for he was always talking about hidden treasure and treasure-ships; and, you see, he was full of grog at the time, as I said."

"And he was talking to you about hidden treasure?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said he had got on to the secret at last, but he could not trust any one; but he knew he could trust me, and he wanted me to go in with him; and he gave me some papers which he said carried a chart of the place where the treasure was hid. Why, yes; hang it! he got off more nonsense than I ever heard him get off before, but, you see, I was used to it, and it made no impression upon me."

"He gave you some papers?" said the man Bigelow, in a nervous tone.

"Yes."

"Did you keep them?"

"Yes, I think I did."

"Did you ever look at them?"

"Look at them? No! What would I waste time on such nonsense for?"

Old Sleuth was, indeed, playing a wonderful game. It looked as though he were guided by some supernatural instinct that caused him thus to fabricate a tale; and as our narrative proceeds, our readers will learn how singularly and strangely he went right straight to the mark in his random shots.

"You say you have those papers?" said Bigelow.

"Yes; I've got 'em somewhere."

"Old man, may be you've struck a fortune!" came the startling announcement.

CHAPTER XV.

SLEUTH pretended at first to be greatly surprised, but after a moment he said, in an indifferent tone:

"Bah! I don't take much stock in anything old Seth Black said."

"Did he tell you anything of his adventures?"

"Well, yes; he did tell me a wild, harum-scarum story; but I knew the man, I tell you—he was a great blower, especially when full of grog."

"What's your name, old shipmate?" asked Bigelow.

"What's my name? Well, it's funny, but my name is Brown, Alec Brown; and our shipmates used to call us the firm of Black & Brown, and sometimes they called us the consignees."

"Will you take some more grog?"

"I reckon not. I can't stand grog as well as I used to when I was younger."

Bigelow looked around furtively, and then said:

"See here, Mr. Brown, if you will come along with me I will let you into a big secret."

"No need to go away from here. I'm comfortable, and I can't get around as handy as I used to when I was younger."

"I've got an important communication to make to you."

"Sail in, my port ear is open."

Bigelow reached over and whispered:

"Some one might hear what I've got to say. I have to talk loud, as I see you are a little deaf."

"Well, I am, but I don't like to own up to it. You see, it ain't pleasant to get old and know that one is losing his faculties."

"I want you to come with me."

"You won't go far?"

"No."

"All right. I'll scud along a little way with you, but I'm no land-lubber to walk much."

The two men left the saloon, and Bigelow led the way to Tompkins Park, and, selecting a seat in a remote corner, he said:

"I want you to tell me just what Seth Black told you."

"I thought you were going to tell me something?"

"So I will. But I want to commence my story where you leave off."

"You want to commence your story where I leave off?"

"Yes."

"I have no story to tell."

"But you met Black?"

"I did."

"And he told you a strange yarn?"

"Yes, he did; but hang it, old shipmate, it was too extraordinary a yarn to repeat!"

"You don't know about that. How are you fixed?"

"How do you mean?"

"What provision have you made against old age?"

"Do you mean what have I stored away in a bank locker for future comforts?"

"Yes."

"Not much."

"You expect to go to sea again?"

"Yes."

"Wouldn't you rather settle down and live easy?"

"You mean to go to Sailors' Snug Harbor?"

"No, I don't."

"I'll have to do that or go to sea again. I've nothing to lay up on—no, sir. I've lived easy—always spent the money ashore I earned afloat."

"That's a failing with us sailor fellows."

"Yes, it is, you bet."

"I've an idea that you can be a rich man."

"I can be a rich man?"

"Yes."

The pretended old sailor laughed, and said:

"When I'm a rich man the crows will sing."

"You may be a rich man."

"Why, are you going to pass over a fortune to me?"

"I may."

"See here, mister, you're talking sort of queer. You may be like old Black—a romancer—and he could beat the world."

"If you had a few thousands you could use them, couldn't you?"

"Could I? Well, you just let go all your sails and sleep on the bowsprit if I couldn't. I'll tell you something, old man. I once had a sister—as good a gal as ever lived—who stood ready to welcome a sailor brother home from sea every trip. You see she was twenty years younger than I, and she married a sailor, and she had one daughter born to her. When her husband was lost at sea it broke her heart—good wife that she was—and she died, leaving a little blind orphan child. That child is now a young lady, and she's poor and helpless; and if I had just a few hundred, it would make me the happiest man on earth to lay the money in the lap of my blind niece, and say to her, 'Here, darling, is a little present from your old uncle.'"

"You can do that."

"I can?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are a strange fellow, and you are quite a joker, I see."

"How?"

"Raising the hopes of an old man. No, no! I will not take any more of your guff. I'm no landsman; but between you and me, it would have been better all round if I had put aside a dollar or two now and then, and I could have made one little, lonely, sad heart to beat with joy."

"You can yef."

"How. I'm asking you?"

"Old Black told you a story?"

"He did."

"Repeat it all to me."

"I tell you it was a wild, nonsensical tale. It was just like one of Black's usual stories, and he was full of grog."

"Tell me the story. No harm can come of it even if it was a romance."

"Well, let me see. He told me that he was on a ship—a brig—that carried a passenger from Australia, and this passenger had chartered the ship to carry his treasure to the United States. On the passage there arose a great storm, and the passengers and crew took to the boats, but old Black was down in the cabin and did not go off in the boats. The brig, however, outlived the storm, and after twenty hours he found himself alone on the vessel. Then there came a calm, and he went below and found that the ship really had treasure on board. He sailed through two days, and met another vessel, and they sent a crew on board, and he ran the vessel to California. But he said nothing about the treasure, and managed to get away with it, and in time transported it to New York, and he hid the treasure, expecting the owner might turn up some day; but the owner never turned up, and then he handed me some papers, and said there was a chart among them, and that if ever anything happened to him I could get the money. That's what he told me, but he was full of grog, you know, and he always imagined all kinds of things when he was full. It was a wild, unreasonable story, you see."

Bigelow listened with a great deal of interest to the old man's cunningly constructed tale.

Old Sleuth, as our readers will see, did indeed tell a cunning tale. He did not let on that Seth Black admitted a crime, and yet his tale was in a certain sense parallel with the real facts, and he had briefly run the parallel up to the time when the deeds occurred in the story to which Maggie had listened.

At length Bigelow asked:

"Did you ever look at those papers?"

"No."

"But you have them?"

"Yes," came the answer; "I have them, somewhere, I know."

CHAPTER XVI.

BIGELOW again devoted a few moments to thought. The man did not know just how to work his scheme. He was seeking to evolve out of his mind a plan; and after a time he said:

"I'd like to look over those papers."

"You can't."

"Why not?"

"Well, Seth told me never to let any one see them. 'And if anything happens to you,' said he, 'destroy them.'"

"But you said Seth's story was all a big yarn."

"I know I did."

"Then what harm is there in showing the papers?"

"I promised."

"According to your idea they are like so much waste paper."

"I did not say what my idea was, shipmate."

"You said all that Seth told you was one of his big yarns."

"That is what I said," replied the detective, with a laugh.

"And did you mean it?"

"No."

Bigelow was taken all aback, and said:

"I don't understand you."

"I see you don't."

"You are called Crazy Brown?"

"Yes."

"I begin to think you are a little off."

"Well, may be I am."

As Sleuth spoke he laughed in his peculiar manner. The fact was that as the little game progressed its real fitness developed more clearly.

"You told me surely you took no stock in the story?"

"I did."

"Then of what value can the papers be?"

"I'm playing for a lead."

"I don't understand."

Again Sleuth laughed, and said:

"I'm crazy, but no fool, do you see?"

"I am all at sea."

Again Sleuth indulged a laugh.

"Do you speak plainly, old man?"

"Seth Black gave me those papers."

"Yes."

"I told you I didn't take any stock in his story."

"You did."

"I'll explain."

"Do so."

"I didn't take any stock in the story, as he told the slaver business and the desertion of the ship by its officers, passengers, and crew, and all that nonsense. No, no, he should have known better than to attempt to crowd all that 'guff' down my throat."

Bigelow began to perceive something. He was getting on to the drift of the old sailor.

"I see," he said.

"What do you see?"

"What you meant when you said you didn't take any stock in his story."

"You see, Black was a born mutineer, and if he thought there was treasure on a ship, and could get enough men to join him, he would make all hands that went against him walk the plank. He was a bad man, Seth Black was."

"And you are a very strange man."

"Well, I suppose I am."

"You thought to deceive me."

"Did I?"

"Yes."

"Honest Injun! so I did!"

Bigelow's eyes opened as he ejaculated:

"What were you after?"

"Information."

"What information did you want?"

"I'll tell you; I recognized you when I came in here, and I said to myself, there is a man who knew Black, a man I reckon who sailed in the brig with him, a man who knows the true story, and I'll go for that chap and pump him."

"You are perfectly frank now."

"Yes, I am."

"What started you in to be so frank?"

"I've learned all I want to know."

"What have you learned?"

"That there is something in what Black told me, and I mean to get the treasure, for I'm convinced now there is some gold hidden somewhere, unless Black rooted it up before he died."

"May be you did."

"No, sir; that treasure lies buried yet."

"Then you think there is some treasure?"

"Yes."

"How many know about it?"

"Only two."

"You and I?"

"Yes."

"There won't be many to come in on a divide."

"No."

"So you really think there is treasure?"

"I know there is treasure."

"And do you know where it is?"

"No; but I am piping down to its hiding-place."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"Then may be you don't want a 'pard' in the game?"

"That depends."

"Upon what?"

"How much you can contribute."

"You're playing cunning now."

"Yes, I am."

"All right; you run your game, I'll run mine, and whoever finds the gold first will own it all."

"We may work together."

"I do not know as I need a 'pard,'" said Sleuth.

Bigelow became uneasy.

"We might as well work in together. You have the chart."

"May be I have."

"You said you had not looked at it."

"Well, I don't mind what I say. I had a good bringing up when I was young, but going to sea made me careless; you know sailors are given to big yarns."

"And you think Seth Black told you one?"
 "Yes, I do."
 "He did."
 "Aha! you know he did, eh?"
 "Yes."
 "Were you on the ship with him?"
 "Yes."
 "And there was treasure?"
 "Yes."
 "Then there was some truth in what Seth told me?"
 "There was a good deal of truth in what he told you; but it was not all true."
 "I see."
 "Can you put your hands on those papers?"
 "I reckon I can."
 "Old man, let you and I go in together."
 "I'll find out first what you can contribute," said the disguised detective.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE detective got back on Bigelow, giving the man his own methods, and the latter was not slow to observe the "points" made on him.

"I can contribute something," he said.
 "All right; show up, and we may go in together."
 As our readers will observe, the detective could not have played a neater game. His great knowledge of human nature enabled him to make a straight move toward the king-row every time. He had skillfully driven Bigelow into a position that compelled the man to tell his tale—the true tale—to finish the story that had been partly overheard by Maggie, and he had made his approaches by the only possible successful methods.

"I hardly know what to do," said Bigelow, after a moment, in answer to Sleuth's last remark.

"You're so sly."
 "That's so; but remember it's a play for big money."
 "You admit you're sly."
 "Certainly I do."
 "And you've been working on this thing?"
 "A little."
 "Have you told me all Seth Black told you?"
 "Yes, I have."
 "Did he mention any localities?"
 "Well, he did."
 "Did Seth Black mention any names?"
 "No."
 "Did you ever know of a man named Thatford?"
 "Did I? Well, you bet I did! And he was a shipmate of Black's."
 "Did Black mention his name?"
 "No."
 "Did you know Thatford was on the same ship with him?"

The pretended old sailor seemed lost in deep thought, but at length he said:

"Thatford, although a friend of Black, was an entirely different man."

"How?"
 "Thatford was not a man to go into any schemes, and I reckon he kept Black out of a good deal of mischief betimes."

"When Black was talking to you he did not mention Thatford's name?"

"No."
 "And you did not know Thatford was on the brig?"
 "I did not."
 "As I told you, he was, and, knowing that fact, what do you think now of Black's story?"

"I doubt it all the more."
 "You see, I've told you something."
 "Not much."
 "I can tell you more."
 "I reckon you can."
 "Black lied to you."
 "That's no real news. I calculated he did."
 "You say Black was a born mutineer?"
 "Yes, he was."
 "You're right."

"I begin to perceive," said the disguised Sleuth, who was inwardly chuckling, his remark having a double meaning. He said, "I begin to perceive," and what he was be-

ginning to perceive was the fact that he was about to get on to the real story."

"I can tell you something, as I said."
 "May be you can help me."
 "May be I can."
 "Will you?"
 "Possibly, yes; what is it you are after?"
 "I'm after the true story."
 "What true story?"
 "You admit Black lied to me?"
 "Yes."
 "You know the real facts of the case?"
 "What facts?"
 "How he came into possession of the treasure."
 "I am not sure he ever came into possession of it."
 "I am," said Sleuth.
 Bigelow gazed in amazement.
 "You know he did?"
 "I don't know it; but I suspect."
 "If he ever got on to the hiding-place, you and I need look no further."

"Oh, yes!"
 "Will you explain?"
 "I'll tell you I believe, although he had the chart, he never found the treasure."

"But he gave you to understand he buried it?"
 "Yes, and that is where he gave himself away, and led me to doubt his whole tale."

"It's strange he gave you the chart."
 "You think so?"
 "Yes."
 "He only loaned it to me."
 "Ah, I see."

"I was to meet him, and return it to him; but I never saw him again. I never knew what became of him, and a week later I shipped aboard a vessel going to China."

"And you really have the papers?"
 "Yes; I told you I had them."

"But you have admitted you have not told me the truth every time."

"So I did; but I have the papers, and we can get right down to business, if you will open up."

"Open up?"
 "Yes."
 "How?"

"I will understand the papers better if I hear the true story of the brig."

"But, old man, you may be playing me."

"If you think so, keep your mouth shut. To tell you the truth, when I met you I was looking for another man, who I know was on the brig."

"What is his name?"
 "There's where you've got me. If I knew his name I'd find him."

"And you met me accidentally?"
 "Yes."

"And you want to hear the true story of the brig?"
 "Yes."

"I'll tell it to you," came the answer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIGELOW proceeded, and related all the incidents as they were overheard by Maggie up to the point where the vessel arrived in San Francisco, and from this point, or rather, beyond this point, the burglar and ex-seaman continued his narrative, and Sleuth was a delighted and triumphant listener, for he had played a most successful game to reach the recital.

Continuing the narrative after the arrival of the brig in San Francisco, Bigelow said:

"Old Thatford may have been honest, but he was a cunning old cuss."

"He was surely honest," said Sleuth.

"Well, I reckon he was too honest by half, and his honesty in the end cost him his life."

"Cost him his life?" exclaimed Sleuth.

"Yes."

"How?"

"Black murdered him."

"Black murdered old Thatford?"

"Yes."

"Why, they were fast friends."

"Yes; but you see Thatford went back on Black. But let me tell you all the facts."

"Go ahead."

"You see, as I said," continued Bigelow, "old Thatford was very cunning, and when the vessel reached San Francisco he managed to discharge the crew, finding money to pay them off, which he said was sent to him by telegraph from the owners in New York. And once alone in possession of the vessel, Thatford removed every ounce of the treasure, and then telegraphed to the owners in New York, and they did telegraph back for a San Francisco house to take charge of the vessel, and the cunning old Thatford turned over everything intact less the treasure."

"How did you learn all these facts?" asked Sleuth.

"We got on to a diary that the old fellow kept, after he was killed."

"Were you one of the mutineers?"

"No, but I pretended to go in with the gang, in order to save my life, as I knew every other man on board would be murdered."

"And you were one of the party that left in the boats?"

"Yes; I did not dare remain on board."

"How did you fellows escape?"

"We were picked up after two days by a vessel, and we told a story of shipwreck and were treated like heroes."

"But were you never recognized?"

"No; as we did not give the name of the brig, but the name of a vessel that we manufactured, and it was always supposed, and is to this day, that we all perished, because we did not return to New York until ten years later."

"Do you know of any of the others of the crew still living?"

"Yes, one."

"Where is he?"

"In New York here."

"And does he know any of the facts of the treasure?"

"Only what I told him."

"And have you told him all?"

"No."

"Go on with your story."

"It was ten years after the murders on the brig that I returned to New York."

"Did you return alone?"

"Yes, and almost the first man I met was Black, and he told me a wonderful story. He said that, some days previously, he had been in New York, when he met Thatford. The two men recognized each other and had a long talk, and Thatford ordered Black to leave the country, saying that, if he did not obey, information would be lodged against him."

"Thatford threatened him?"

"Yes."

"And Black did not heed the warning?"

"Yes, he did, but not in the way Thatford intended. You see, Black promised to leave the country, but instead he secretly followed Thatford and discovered that the old man was living in a fisherman's hut on the south shore of Long Island, and he also discovered that the old man had a little girl living with him who was supposed to be his daughter. But Black concluded that the girl was the daughter of the passenger who had owned the treasure and who had been killed in the massacre on the brig."

Old Sleuth's blood boiled as he listened to this terrible tale, but he managed to conceal his feelings, and listened attentively to a continuation of the startling narrative, and he said:

"His conclusion was correct?"

"Yes."

"The child really was the daughter of the passenger?"

"Yes."

"What became of the child?"

"She is still living."

"She is still living?" cried Sleuth.

"Yes."

"Then she is the real owner of the gold?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where she is now?"

"No; I have been trying to find her."

"You have been trying to find her?"

"Yes."

"To tell her about the fortune?"

"Well, I might tell her," answered the man, with a cold smile upon his wicked face.

"What is the girl's name?" innocently asked Sleuth.

"She goes by the name of Blood, so I understand, and she had another name—Gussie Thatford."

"Go on with your narrative."

"Well, you see, as I said, I struck Black just after his meeting with Thatford, and he was in mortal terror; and he told me that I would be discovered, and that we would both hang; and he bid me come down to his home and see him."

"Did you go?"

"I did."

"Let's hear the rest of your yarn."

"I am going to tell you all; but first let me say that I had nothing to do with what followed. I am not a murderer, and I had no hand in the death of Thatford."

"Go on and tell me about Thatford's death," said Sleuth.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I WISH you to remember I had nothing to do with that affair."

"That's all right."

"You see, Black said to me that all he intended to do was to take Thatford a prisoner and hold him until he took an oath not to betray us, and it was with that understanding I went into the scheme. Black chartered a fishing-smack, and one night four of us went aboard, and we sailed to an inlet near the spot on the coast where old Thatford dwelt with the little girl."

"What did you say the little girl's real name was?" said Sleuth.

Bigelow permitted a strange light to suddenly gleam in his eyes, and for the first time evidently a suspicion flashed through his mind, and he said, in a fierce tone:

"You appear very anxious to learn the real name of the child?"

"Yes, I am anxious."

"Why?"

"Her name has considerable bearing upon the papers in my possession."

The answer was an inspiration, as it appeared to banish Bigelow's suspicions as suddenly as they had arisen.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I do not know the girl's real name; but you will find her real name when you look over those papers."

"Ah, yes; I reckon now I've an idea of her name, so go on with your story."

"Let me see, I reached the point where we sailed to the inlet?"

"Yes."

"Now, remember, I had no idea as to what was to occur, for had I known I would not have gone into the scheme, and had I learned later what his game was I would have protested."

"That's all right."

"Certainly, it is all right, for I am not a murderer."

"But didn't you take a hand in the fight on the brig?"

"No, sir; I only pretended to do so."

"Oh, you were very particular."

The disguised detective made the remark in a tantalizing tone.

"I don't care what you think," said Bigelow, "I am giving it to you straight."

"All right."

"Black had the bearings for Thatford's cottage, or cabin, and he led us straight forward, and we soon saw the glimmer of the light from the windows, and then Black ordered a halt, and he said:

"You fellows wait here. I will go forward and have a talk with the old man, and may be I can bring him around; if not I'll give you the signal and you fellows can come along, and we will make him a prisoner and take him on board the sloop."

"He went forward alone," continued Bigelow, "and we three fellows waited for the signal; and I reckon fully ten minutes passed. We heard no noise, no alarm of any kind until Black came out of the cabin and tipped us the signal, and then we went forward. I was the first one to enter the place. There was a light in the room, and a sight met my gaze, I tell you, that made my heart stand still."

Sleuth uttered an exclamation; it was a sort of running

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A MODERN ALCHEMIST.

JEFF CLAYTON PRESCRIBES EFFECTUALLY FOR ANOTHER MYSTERY

I.

Mr. Jervis returned from Leeds on Monday afternoon, and on Monday night he sent off twenty copies of the following advertisement, which duly appeared in as many London and provincial newspapers on Wednesday morning:

JOHN WELFORD.—Twenty pounds will be paid for the present address, if living, or proof of death, if dead, of John Welford, who was born at Leeds in 1882; and whose father, William Welford, emigrated to New South Wales in 1883. Apply, Jervis & Co., Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, W.C.

When Mr. Jervis reached his office on Wednesday morning he found a telegram awaiting him. It had been "handed in" at the Commercial Road Post Office, Milltown, at 9:35 A. M., and ran as follows:

Just seen your advertisement. I am the John Welford referred to. My present address is 27 Bridge Street, Milltown.—**JOHN WELFORD.**

As the case was an important one, involving a sum of over £70,000, Mr. Jervis decided not to write to Welford, but to go and see him. Two hours later, accordingly, he was on his way to Milltown.

Bridge Street proved to be a narrow back street leading out of Commercial Road.

"Does Mr. Welford live here?" asked Mr. Jervis of the elderly woman who opened the door of No. 27 in answer to his knock, and whose name, he afterwards learned, was Mrs. Barr.

"He lodges here," corrected Mrs. Barr; "but he isn't in at present, and he won't be in before seven o'clock."

Mr. Jervis had foreseen the possibility of having to spend the night in Milltown, and had brought a hastily-packed portmanteau with him. He drove to the Royal Hotel, engaged a bed-room, and returned to Bridge Street about half-past seven.

Welford had not yet returned. Whilst waiting for him, Mr. Jervis took advantage of the opportunity to question Mrs. Barr about her lodger.

"He's a very nice, steady young fellow," she said; "but I can't tell you much about him, as he's only been lodging here a little over a fortnight."

"Where did he lodge before he came here?"

"I don't know; but it wasn't in Milltown."

"How do you know?"

"I had advertised for a lodger, and he answered the advertisement. When he came he said he was a stranger to Milltown, and had only arrived that morning. He said he had seen my advertisement in the 'Post,' and that was why he had come to me."

"Had he any luggage with him?"

"One bag and a small tin trunk."

"Then Mr. Welford isn't what—er—you might call well off?"

"He's, very poor, I should say; though he paid me a month in advance, like a gentleman."

"Did he say why he had come to Milltown?"

"Yes. He said he had got employment in the town."

"Of what kind?"

"I don't know. When I asked him, he laughed, and said that his employer was an eccentric old gentleman, who had made him swear that he wouldn't tell anybody in Milltown who his employer was or what his work was."

"And do you mean to say that Welford has been lodging here for over a fortnight, and you don't know what his employment is?"

"It's a fact! All I know is that he leaves here every morning at half-past nine, and comes back for supper about seven o'clock. Why he is so late to-night I can't imagine."

"He left here this morning, as usual, at half-past nine?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Barr. "But he'll be in directly, no doubt, and then he'll be able to tell you all you want to know."

But Mrs. Barr was mistaken. Welford was not "in directly." As a matter of fact, he had not returned when Mr. Jervis left at ten o'clock, and he had not returned when Mr. Jervis called again at nine o'clock on Thursday morning.

As the day wore on, and there was still no sign of Welford's return, Mr. Jervis became alarmed. Eventually he communicated with the police, but this was of little use, for at the end of forty-eight hours they had not only failed to solve the mystery of Welford's disappearance, but they had equally failed to discover what his employment was.

And so, on Saturday afternoon, Mr. Jervis wired for Jeff Clayton.

II.

Mr. Jervis met Jeff Clayton at the station, and, as they drove to Bridge Street, the lawyer explained to the detective how and why he was interested in the case.

"About ten days ago," he said, "I received a letter from a firm of solicitors in Sydney, for whom I have acted before, informing me that one of their clients, named William Welford, had died intestate, leaving a fortune of over seventy thousand pounds. From papers found in his house after his death, they said, it appeared that he was a native of Leeds, and had emigrated to Australia in 1883. They requested me, therefore, to make inquiries in Leeds, and ascertain if he had any relatives who were entitled to the money."

"I went down to Leeds," he continued, "and, with much trouble, discovered these facts: William Welford married in 1881, and in 1882 his wife presented him with a son, who was christened John. She died a few weeks later; and in 1883 Welford emigrated to Australia, leaving his baby son in the charge of an aged couple named Dudley. He promised to send them money from time to time to pay for the upbringing of the child, but he never did so. In fact, after he left Leeds, nothing more was heard of him by Mr. and Mrs. Dudley."

"I further ascertained," he went on, "that the Dudleys left Leeds in 1887, taking Welford's son with them. But nobody knew where they went, or whether they were now alive or dead. Consequently, on my return to London last Monday, I sent out this advertisement, which appeared in all the leading London and provincial papers on Wednesday morning."

When Jeff Clayton had read the advertisement Mr. Jervis showed him Welford's telegram, and told him of his interview with Mrs. Barr, and his subsequent interview with the local police.

"So that's how the matter stands at present," he concluded. "John Welford is evidently William Welford's son, and, as such, the legal heir to his father's money. We know that he left Leeds, in 1887, with the Dudleys; but from that date until three weeks ago his history is a blank. All we know is that he came to lodge with Mrs. Barr three weeks ago; that he told her he had obtained employment in the town with an eccentric old gentleman, who had made him swear that he would not divulge the nature of his employment; and that every day he left his lodgings at half-past nine in the morning, and returned at seven in the evening."

Mr. Jervis had scarcely finished speaking when the hansom drew up at 27 Bridge Street. Here the detective questioned and cross-questioned Mrs. Barr, without, however, eliciting any more information than she had already given to Mr. Jervis and the police. He then requested her to show him the room—a combined bed-room and sitting-room—which Welford had occupied.

For a time his examination yielded no result. Presently, however, the detective made a discovery which appeared to afford him the liveliest satisfaction.

Hanging behind the door was a shabby tweed jacket. On the front of it were several stains, and on one of the sleeves was a daub of green paint. In one of the side-pockets was a match-box containing a few wax vestas. In the ticket-pocket were four old tramway-tickets.

"Here are three invaluable clues," said Jeff Clayton, as he laid the coat, the match-box, and the tickets on the table. "This smudge of paint on the coat-sleeve might possibly prove to be a fourth clue, if only we knew its origin."

"I can tell you all about that," said Mrs. Barr. "When Mr. Welford came here, three weeks ago, he was wearing that coat, and he wore it every day up to last Tuesday. When he came

home last Tuesday, he showed me that daub of paint, and he told me he had accidentally knocked up against a newly-painted lamp-post outside his employer's house."

This information so obviously increased the detective's satisfaction that Mr. Jervis was fain to demand an explanation.

The detective laughed.

"You will agree with me," he said, "that, before we can hope to unravel the mystery of Welford's disappearance, we must first know what his occupation was, and where he went to when he left his lodgings at half-past nine every morning?"

"Of course!"

"Very well," said Jeff Clayton. "Let us first deal with the question of where he went to every morning. Here are four old tramway-tickets. They are all for the same route—from Commercial Road to Western Park. When you find four old tramway-tickets in a man's pocket, all for the same route, it is safe to assume that the man in whose pocket the tickets are found has been a pretty frequent traveller by that route.

"We may take it as proved, therefore," he continued, "that Welford was in the habit of travelling by the trams which run from Commercial Road to Western Park. Mrs. Barr has told us that he never went out in the evenings after he returned from business. What is the obvious deduction?"

"That Welford used the trams as a means of getting to and from the place where he was employed," said Mr. Jervis. "That is to say, when he left here, he walked as far as Commercial Road, and took a tram from there to Western Park."

"Not necessarily to Western Park. He may not have journeyed all the way to Western Park. He may have alighted from the tram before it reached the Park."

"He may have done so, but we have no proof that he did."

"Excuse me, we have. Look at our second clue—this match-box. It bears, as you see, by way of advertisement, the name and address of a tobacconist in Cemetery Road."

The detective turned to Mrs. Barr.

"It is a long time since I was last in Milltown," he said; "but, if I remember rightly, the trams from Commercial Road to Western Park run along Western Road, and Cemetery Road is one of the streets leading out of Western Road, about half a mile on this side of the park."

"That is so," said Mrs. Barr.

"Well, now," said Jeff Clayton, turning to Mr. Jervis again, "if Welford purchased this box of matches, as he evidently did, at a tobacconist's shop in Cemetery Road, it is a fair deduction, I think, that he was in the habit of alighting from the tram before it reached the Park, and turning down Cemetery Road. You agree?"

"Yes."

"Then, in our efforts to find out where Welford went to every morning, we have now traced him as far as Coventry Road. Can we trace him any farther? I think we can."

He pointed to the smudge of paint on the coat-sleeve.

"Welford told Mrs. Barr on Tuesday night," he said, "that this was due to his having accidentally knocked up against a freshly-painted lamp-post outside his employer's house. If we can find a street or road in the neighborhood of Cemetery Road in which the lamp-posts were newly painted last Tuesday, we shall have found the street in which Welford's employer lives."

"And now for our last clue," he continued, pointing to the stains on the front of the coat. "This stain is due to iodine. This has been caused by nitric acid, and this, in all probability, by bromide. This smells of ammonia, and this of sulphuretted hydrogen. In a word, all these stains have been caused by chemicals. What is the obvious conclusion? Is it not that Welford's work lay amongst chemicals—in other words, that he was employed in a chemical laboratory?"

The words had scarcely crossed his lips ere Mrs. Barr exclaimed:

"Now I know! I know where he went to! I know who his employer was! Professor Allen, the borough analyst, who is also the professor of chemistry at Milltown College, lives in Junction Road. And Junction Road leads out of Cemetery Road."

"Then we'll pay him a visit," said Jeff Clayton to the lawyer. "Come along."

III.

The lamp-posts in Junction Road had obviously been recently repainted. A policeman informed them that the lamp-posts had been repainted on the previous Tuesday. He also directed them to the borough analyst's house.

Professor Allen listened to the detective's story with the greatest interest, and also with a twinkle in his eye.

"So," he said, "your clues have led you to the conclusion that I am the eccentric old gentleman who employed Welford, and made him swear that he wouldn't reveal the nature of his employment? It is a pity to demolish such an artistically-constructed theory, but as a matter of fact, I have never seen Welford, and know nothing of him. Moreover, I have no laboratory here, as I do all my work at my office in Commercial Road."

"Then I owe you an apology for troubling you," said Jeff Clayton. "All the same, I am none the less convinced that my artistically-constructed theory, as you are pleased to call it, is sound. Welford was undoubtedly employed by somebody who is interested in chemical research, and who lives in this neighborhood. Do you know of anybody answering to that description?"

"Yes. At number ninety-six, over the way, lives old Sir

Charles Clutton. You remember him, of course? He was once one of our foremost authorities in chemistry.

"For the last five years," he continued, "Sir Charles has been undoubtedly mad, though not mad enough to warrant his being put under restraint. Two years ago, he built himself a laboratory at the back of his house, with iron-barred windows, steel-plated doors, burglar-alarms, and all the rest of it; and rumor has it that he spends all his time in trying to discover the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life."

"A modern alchemist!" said Jeff Clayton, with a laugh.

"Exactly! His household consists of himself and an old housekeeper; and regularly, about once a month, he advertises for a confidential assistant, who— But I'll show you one of his advertisements."

A moment later he produced the following advertisement for the detective's inspection:

WANTED—A well-qualified assistant for research work in important chemical investigation. Must be prepared to take oath of secrecy. Liberal salary. Apply by letter only in first instance to Sir Charles Clutton, F.R.S., 96 Junction Rd., Milltown.

"To my certain knowledge," said Professor Allen, "he has had ten assistants in the last twelve months, but all of them have left him, after a few weeks' employment, on account of his insane behavior."

"Thank you! Now, we'll go across and interview Sir Charles Clutton," said Jeff Clayton.

IV.

Sir Charles was not at home. He had left for London on Wednesday night. Such was the information vouchsafed by his housekeeper at No. 96.

"Perhaps you can tell us what we wish to know," said Jeff Clayton. "We have called to inquire about a young fellow named Welford. You recognize the name, I see. Am I right in supposing he was Sir Charles's assistant?"

"Yes," replied the housekeeper; "but Sir Charles dismissed him on Wednesday evening, in consequence of a quarrel they had had."

"Do you know what they quarreled about?"

"I don't. I was out shopping at the time. When I went out, Sir Charles and Mr. Welford were in the laboratory; but when I came back, Mr. Welford had gone, the laboratory was locked up and in darkness, and Sir Charles was in his bed-room, packing his portmanteau."

"He was very excited and strange in his manner," she continued. "I asked him why he was packing his bag, and he said he was going up to London to hunt for a new assistant, as Mr. Welford and he had quarreled, and he had dismissed him on the spot."

"So you didn't actually see Mr. Welford leave?" said Jeff Clayton.

"No."

"Have you ever been into the laboratory since Sir Charles went away?"

"No. In the first place, Sir Charles has the key, and, in the second place, he doesn't allow anybody but himself and his assistant to go into the laboratory."

The detective turned to Mr. Jervis.

"Welford was here on Wednesday evening," he said. "Nobody saw him leave. He and Sir Charles quarreled, and immediately afterwards Sir Charles departed for London, leaving no address. Nobody has been into the laboratory since. Our course is clear, I think?"

The lawyer nodded. His face was very white.

"We'd better have a policeman," he said.

The policeman whom they had previously questioned was still at the end of the road. He listened to their story, and accompanied them to the laboratory—a prison-like building, in a secluded corner of the grounds at the back of the house.

And here, on bursting open the door, they found John Welford—not dead, as they had feared—not even seriously injured—but half dead with cold and hunger.

* * * * *

The explanation was simple. Sir Charles, in Welford's words, had been "madder than ever" on Wednesday evening, and, amongst other things, had conceived the idea that Welford was trying to rob him of his precious formula for the manufacture of the Elixir of Life! Angered by Welford's amused denial of this charge, he had struck him a blow which had momentarily stunned him. Then, in a mad fit of terror, fully believing that he had murdered his assistant, he had locked up the laboratory and had fled to London, where he was subsequently discovered, hiding under an assumed name, in a third-class hotel in Bloomsbury. He is now in an asylum.

The iron-barred windows and the steel-plated door had prevented Welford getting out; whilst the distance of the building from the house had prevented his shouts being heard. He had thus been kept a prisoner, without food and drink, from Wednesday evening until Saturday night. That he would have perished of starvation if it had not been for Jeff Clayton admits of little doubt.

(Another complete story of Jeff Clayton, Detective, appears in the current issue of the "ADVENTURE SERIES.")

comment and meant nothing, and the man Bigelow went right on with his narrative.

"Yes," continued the man; "it made my heart stand still. It was the most ghastly sight, under all the circumstances, my eyes ever gazed on. Yes, sir; on the floor lay old Thatford. I recognized him at a glance, although he was as dead as a door nail. He had evidently been strangled. As I looked upon him first, as I said, I uttered a cry, turned back, and saw Black standing by me. I shall never forget the expression of his face, as he said:

"I had to do it—yes, I had to do it. The old man showed fight. He went for me. I did it in self-defense."

"You lie, Black!" I said.

"The man flashed a terrible look out of his eyes upon me, and I thought to myself, 'Have a care, old man, or he will have to do it for you.'"

Bigelow rested a moment in his recital, and Sleuth asked:

"Were there any signs of a struggle?"

"No, sir, there was not."

"Then you do not believe there was a fight?"

"There was no fight. If there had been we would have heard something. No; it was not done in self-defense."

"It was a cold-blooded murder?"

"That's what it was, sure."

"Go on with your narrative."

"I may as well tell you now," resumed Bigelow, "that I had made an enemy of Black by my remark. Yes, he was dead against me from that time out."

"Did he harbor evil thoughts against you afterward?"

"Yes, he did; but I did not get on to his enmity until some time afterward."

"Why didn't you denounce him?"

"I wanted to get on to his secret."

"The secret of the buried treasure?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead."

"Well, sir, the man was dead, and that was all there was about it; and in a room off the main room we found a little girl in bed. One of the men said, 'Let's strangle her too.'"

"Let's strangle her too?" repeated Sleuth.

"Yes; that's what the man said," continued Bigelow.

"Then the other men were well into Black's confidence."

"How?"

"They knew he intended to murder Thatford."

"How do you know that?"

"One of them said, 'Let's strangle the child too?'"

"Ah, I see; I did not think of that before," and at the same instant another idea appeared to run through Bigelow's mind, or rather his original suspicion seemed to return, and he fixed a keen, searching glance on the detective. The latter, however, gave no sign, but said, as a misleader:

"It's lucky I held on to those papers, and I think you and I can make a big thing out of this affair; but go ahead with your narrative."

"There is not much more to tell. The child was not killed, but sent aboard the sloop. Black protested against any harm being done to her, and there followed a search of the cabin."

"What was found?" asked Sleuth.

"I'll tell you. Between you and I, it was in order to get rid of me that Black spared the child's life, leastwise that is my suspicion. I was sent with the child to the boat, and ordered to remain in care of her until the balance of the party joined me. So you see I was not present when the search was made. Later on, one of the men joined me, and we rowed out to the sloop with the girl, and he returned with the boat for the rest of the party."

"And did you let him go?"

"Yes; I was under Black's orders, and I did not dare protest."

"Didn't you learn afterward what was found?"

"I did; but it was a long time afterward—indeed, after Black's death."

"Go on and tell me what was found."

"In the first place, they found a big sum of ready money."

"And didn't you get your share?"

"No, sir, I did not. And they found a black trunk, and in that trunk was some papers, and among the papers was a diary kept by Thatford. And from that diary Black

learned all about the movements of Thatford after he had been deserted on the brig."

"And what became of those papers?"

"Some of them fell into our hands after Black's death, but one very important paper we never found."

"And what paper was that?" asked Sleuth.

"It was a chart giving the bearings as to where ten millions in gold is buried," came the answer.

CHAPTER XX.

OLD SLEUTH had worked down to a pretty clear statement, and he was in possession of certain facts previously obtained that enabled him to measure pretty accurately the statements of the man Bigelow, and when the latter said the chart indicated where ten millions in gold were buried, there came a peculiarly pleasant gleam to the detective's eyes.

"Ten millions in gold!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"How did you learn the amount?"

"Well we got on to it. You see, as I learned afterward, Black did get on to a good deal of money, and he gave all the men who were with him some but me. He just went cold on me."

"What became of the papers that were in the trunk?"

"I've got some of them, and they are divided around, but I reckon you've the valuable papers. You see it wasn't until after Black's death that we got on to a strange fact."

"And what was that?"

Bigelow did not answer immediately, but said:

"Are we in together?"

"How do you mean?"

"Have I given information enough to entitle me to form a partnership with you?"

"I don't see any reason why we should not go in together to hunt up this treasure."

"Well, I'll tell. The chart, as it turned out, was sewed up in the skirt of the child's dress, and that little paper is worth ten millions, and now the question is, did Black ever learn this secret and get the chart, or did he only learn the secret, and fail to get the chart?"

"Are you sure the story of the chart is not a misleader?"

"No, sir; that chart was hidden in the child's dress."

"How did you learn that fact?"

"After Black's death we made an excursion down to the house where he had lived and we made a search, and we came upon some papers. The old rascal had hidden them, but we found them, and among them was the diary. And then we found a letter of instructions. The letter was addressed to a lawyer."

"What was the name of the lawyer?"

"A fictitious name had been assumed by the lawyer."

"Possibly he knew the secret and has got the money."

"No, sir; it was evident that old Thatford feared some evil. He may have had a premonition of coming evil, and started in to write the letter. The letter was never finished and never delivered, and, from its character, it is evident the lawyer was not into the secret."

"How did you learn the name of the lawyer was fictitious?"

"We have hunted New York to find the lawyer."

"Who has that letter?"

"I've got it."

"By George!" cried Sleuth, "with the letters you have and the papers I've got, we'll get that money."

"It is possible Black got it and hid it a second time."

"No, Black never got it."

"How do you know?"

"Since you have been talking, I've put certain facts together, and I've reached certain conclusions."

"And you think Black never got the money?"

"He never got it."

"And haven't you the chart?"

"Well, I must look over my papers and see."

"Do you think the gal got the chart?" asked Bigelow.

"No," answered Sleuth, quickly.

Bigelow gave a start, and exclaimed:

"You appear to be pretty certain!"

"Yes, I am."

"Then you have seen the girl?"

"We won't say anything about that; but the girl can't get the chart."

"Then Black may have got it."
 "I don't think he did; but you and I will meet again."
 "Eh?"
 "We will meet again."
 "Are you going?"
 "Yes."
 "But see here, you've emptied me and you haven't given me anything."
 "Is that so?" yawned Sleuth.
 "That's so, dead sure."
 "But I've nothing to give you."
 "Those papers?"
 "They're all right."
 "And you're going?"
 "Yes; but you and I will meet again."
 "See here, shipmate, this ain't at all satisfactory to me."

"Is that so?"
 "I think you've played me."
 Bigelow, at length, had grown very suspicious, and with the suspicion there arose a feeling of anger in his heart. He stepped close to the detective, and, bending his lip to the latter's ear, said:
 "You meant to play me."
 "Go 'long—you're foolish!"
 "I tell you, old man, you've got to open up; you've pulled me clear out."
 "We'll meet again."
 "When?"
 "Oh, in good time."
 "You think you got all out of me?"
 "No."

"You didn't. The most important matter I kept back, and that is something concerning the gal."

Sleuth felt a twinge when it came to him that possibly he had not carried the game quite far enough, but then as quickly he remembered that he had secured a good deal to work on, and other developments would come in their turn.

In the meantime Bigelow's suspicions had become more keenly aroused. The wildest kind of fancies ran through his mind. The fellow felt that he had been played as mortal man had never been played before, and in his mind he had settled upon a certain plan; indeed, he mentally muttered:

"You think you've got me, old man. Well, we shall see."

"I will go now," said Sleuth.
 "But you did not say when you would see me again?"
 "I will let you know."
 "You will let me know?"
 "Yes."

"But how will you send me word?"
 "I'll find a way to send you word," said Sleuth, and started away, and from that point a great double strategic game commenced.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Sleuth separated from him, Bigelow stood a moment watching the retreating form of the pretended old sailor, and then there fell from his lips the muttered exclamation:

"I've been played!"
 As Sleuth walked away, strangely enough he muttered:
 "I played him well!"

Bigelow though he had been playing a good game. His game was what the brokers call a "future," and from his standpoint he had worked well; and had the facts been as he believed them to be at the time, his would have been a good game.

In the first place, Bigelow believed Sleuth was an old tar, the detective had acted the rôle so well, and then again Bigelow believed Sleuth possessed considerable knowledge as to what had occurred. We will go so far as to say that Bigelow did not believe he was giving the pretended sailor any new facts; his part was to let the supposed Brown believe that he was putting great confidence in him. Bigelow's confidence had an object. He was working on the old adage, confidence begets confidence, and as he saw Sleuth departing it came over him that he had been fooled, and he whipped himself accordingly.

Bigelow had really through he was telling any new facts to the pretended sailor he would have been as dumb

as an oyster; but, as intimated, he though Sleuth was feigning ignorance, and availed himself of the chance to betray his own knowledge.

The real fact was Bigelow had never been on the brig, and he had come to a knowledge of all the facts through an acquaintance with an old sailor, who had told him the story in all its details, and Bigelow was assuming the rôle of the sailor, and that is why he told his tale so readily, believing Sleuth did have the papers. He desired to make himself solid with the old salt, secure the papers, and then—well, the chances are that, had Sleuth been what he pretended to be, his acquaintance with Bigelow would have led to his death in the end.

"Hang me for a fool!" again muttered Bigelow. "I believe that all I told that fellow was news to him. Now that I recall, I gave it all to him. He gave me nothing. Yes, I've been played; but I'll get square with Mr. Man, you bet!"

Sleuth continued on his way. He had a little scheme in his mind. He had ascertained just how Bigelow stood, and he wanted to get possession of that diary and other documents he had reason to believe Bigelow had in his possession. Armed with the papers, the detective was set to make a search for the buried treasure. He wanted to read that diary over. He had no hope of ever finding the chart; but when his well-trained mind once digested the papers, he calculated he could form some idea just how to go to work.

As stated, the detective kept on his way, and as he walked he also muttered:

"I think that fellow suspects me. The rôle of Brown is played out for the present. I must get at him under another cover."

Sleuth, as our old-time readers know, was acquainted with New York from one corner to the other. He knew every inch of the city, and just where every dive was located; indeed, he had things down finer, as far as New York is concerned, than any living man.

He kept on his way, and soon fell to a fact, and again he muttered:

"It is as I suspected—that fellow has his suspicions aroused, and he is trailing me. It is a case of the trailer trailed," added the detective, with a laugh, and a moment later he added still further, "I'll run him a good chase."

The detective at length reached a point toward which he had been forging, and he entered a saloon. The proprietor was a German, and as Sleuth entered he advanced to the man, and said:

"Halloo, Metzger!"
 "Eh! I vos not know you. Halloo!"

The detective reached over and whispered in the man's ear:

"Sleuth."

There came a startled look to the German's face and a change over his manner.

"Eh? Vot can I do?"
 "I'm trying to give a lad the shake."
 "Oh, yes; I see vot you vos up to now."

Quick as lightning the detective worked a transform. The sailor disappeared, and in his stead there stood a respectable-looking German-American citizen before Metzger's bar.

The transform was done so quickly that the owner of the place uttered an exclamation of amazement; but the fact was Sleuth had prepared himself to work a dozen changes if necessary. So great was his skill that he could have made a fortune on the stage as a change artist.

Having worked his transform, he stepped to a table, sat down, ordered his beer, and said, in German:

"I'm not here, remember."
 "Oh, yes; I get on to it," responded the German.

The words had hardly left Sleuth's lips when a man entered the place, and the detective did experience a start of surprise; but he had the advantage. Bigelow had also worked a good transform; but Sleuth went through the man's cover. Would Bigelow go through his little change?

As the burglar entered the place he let his eyes stray around the room, and, as it happened, there was no one in the barroom but the disguised detective and the keeper of the place.

Bigelow took a seat, ordered some refreshment, and, as the proprietor waited on him, he asked:

"Where is the other man?"

"Eh?" ejaculated the proprietor.

"Sit down here."

The landlord sat down, Sleuth pretended to be reading a German paper, and Bigelow continued, in a low tone:

"There was a customer just entered here ahead of me?"

"Yes," said the ready-witted German, "there were two or three customers in and out."

"In and out?"

"Yes."

"The last man who came in ahead of me did not go out?"

"No, I guess not."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. I can not remember who goes in and out—there are so many in the course of the day."

Bigelow nodded toward Sleuth, and asked:

"How long has that man been here?"

"Oh, dat vas mine freindt. He was come in two hours ago. He generally stays half the day mit me."

"There was another man came in."

"I don't was see him."

Bigelow described Sleuth as he appeared under the cover of the old salt.

"Dat man was not in here," said the keeper of the place.

"Oh! may be he went in next door."

"Yes, he must haf done dat; he go in next door."

Bigelow finished his drink, and rising, went out, and the German, approaching Sleuth, said:

"Dat vas der man?"

"Yes."

"Did I throw him off good?"

"Yes," answered Sleuth.

Sleuth said yes, but he well knew Bigelow had not been thrown off, and he muttered, mentally:

"That fellow is smart; I must look out; it will take nice work to fool him now."

The detective had reached the conclusion that Bigelow had not been deceived, and he could also perceive that the fellow had acted just right under all the circumstances; and Sleuth was correct.

Bigelow had not been deceived. He had not recognized the detective, but he had put certain facts together, and he had reached a conclusion.

CHAPTER XXII.

WE have intimated that Bigelow reached a conclusion, and such is the fact, and the words he muttered after leaving Metzger's betrayed the truth. He said, in a low and a mocking soliloquy:

"Did my eyes deceive me? No, I do not let my eyes deceive me. I saw that man enter the saloon; I did not see him come out. There was but one man besides the keeper in the place. A live man in the flesh can not go through a solid wall. If the man did not come out, he must have stayed in; and if he did stay in, he must have been there when I entered; and as there was but one man in the place besides the keeper, as I said, he must be the man I am trailing. But, again, did my eyes deceive me? No, my eyes did not deceive me. And a change had come over the man. He was giving me the slip. He must have felt to the fact that I was following him. Good! That opens up a big game. I've been played. The man went under a transform, eh? What does it all mean? We shall see. I'll lay for him; I'll lay for Metzger's friend—that's what I'll do!"

Bigelow's little soliloquy justified Sleuth's conclusion that Bigelow was no fool; and, indeed, as the detective thought matters over, he began to discern how it was the fellow had been so confidential, and the detective muttered:

"Well, it's all the same; he gave me the information. I know that what he told me was pretty near the truth, and now the question is how to give him the 'shake' and then get on to him again."

Our readers have possibly discovered that Sleuth desired, as he said, to shake Bigelow. He wanted to shake him as Brown and get on to him again as somebody else.

The detective was sorry the man had fallen to his little transform business, for the detective was well satisfied the fellow was on to him in that direction.

Sleuth remained in the saloon fully three hours. There

was a bare chance that he might give Bigelow a "throw off."

At length he said to Metzger:

"Do you know a lad who can carry a message for me?"

"Yes; there is a lad comes in here sometimes."

"Cute?"

"Yes, sir; he's a dandy."

"Can you get word to him?"

"I'll see."

A few moments later a little girl entered the place to buy something, and the man Metzger whispered a few words to her in German, and she took her can and went out, and a few moments later a lad entered the place. He also carried a can. Sleuth called the boy over to him, asked him a few questions, and made up his mind that he was all right. He then gave him certain directions and the lad went out with his can, and an hour passed and then a man entered the place. The last comer glanced around, and Sleuth passed him a signal. The signal was answered, and the man took a seat at the table near the detective, and there followed a whispered conversation, and after a few moments the man left the saloon.

Half an hour passed, and another man entered the saloon. He did not wait for a signal, but went straight to Sleuth, and, sitting down, said:

"He is there!"

"You took a good look at him?"

"Yes."

"He's on the straight watch?"

"He is, sure."

"Let me see," muttered Sleuth, musingly; "we might arrest him and get him out of the way in that manner."

"I will do it if you say so."

"Not a good scheme."

Quite a number of men were now coming and going out of the place, as it was after six o'clock.

"I've got it," said Sleuth; "follow me."

The detective exchanged a few words with Metzger, and then led his friend out of the saloon. A few moments passed, and Sleuth and the man returned, and after a short interval they again left the place. Sleuth walked up the street, and the next minute, Bigelow dodged out of his hiding-place and started to dog the detective, and at the same instant the man who had come to Sleuth's aid uttered a laugh and the words:

"Aha! I've fooled him."

We will let our readers into the secret at once. The great detective had worked one of his marvelous games. When he and his pal, whom he had sent for by the lad, left the room, they worked a mutual transform. Sleuth got up as his pal, and his pal got into the disguise Sleuth had worn. So when it appeared that Sleuth left the saloon first it was not Sleuth, but his pal. And it was Sleuth who laid back and watched the game, and gave utterance to the exclamation, "I've fooled him at last!"

While the detective and his pal were making the transform, Sleuth let his man into the game, and gave him his directions, and so when the man Bigelow started to follow the supposed Sleuth it became a double shadow.

Bigelow thought he was trailing Sleuth, and the detective knew he was trailing Bigelow, and there stood the difference.

The detective's pal was a man well up in his business, and, having received his hints, he knew just how to work the game. He walked along down-town and soon disappeared in a regular sailors' boarding-house.

Bigelow had followed, and when he saw his man enter the boarding-house he was taken all aback, and exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be shot! That gets me!"

Sleuth was near by—indeed, near enough to overhear the exclamation.

Bigelow stood a moment, and then said:

"Well, I've got him holed. I know where to come to look for him, so that's all square. It might not be safe to run into his lair to-night. He's on the lookout for me; but to-morrow I'll get down on him. I'll be a sailor just from sea."

Sleuth had got down so as to hear every word Bigelow spoke, and there was a faint smile on his face, for he saw how he really had his man dead to rights. Bigelow, after a moment, started to walk away, and Sleuth fell to his trail.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SLEUTH had made up his mind to rush his shadow right along, and, in order to get on to his man, worked a most radical change in his appearance.

He had one little incident in his favor. The man Bigelow had, as he supposed, tracked Sleuth to a certain resort, and he would be congratulating himself on his smartness and would not dream of the fine trick that had been played on him.

Sleuth's purpose was to shadow the man to his home. The detective calculated that the papers, if there were any, would be there, and it was with a determination to hold on to his trail that he kept the man's steps in sight.

Bigelow proceeded toward Broadway, and was walking along leisurely when suddenly he made a turn and seized hold of a young fellow whom he met in the street. The detective was near by at the moment, and, as the two men moved to the edge of the sidewalk and stood under a street-lamp, he had a good chance to view the young man's face whom Bigelow had hailed.

The detective was deeply interested at once, as there was something very strange and startling in the incident. The young man was a very handsome fellow, not over three-and-twenty, and he seemed to be laboring under a fit of great excitement and trepidation, and Sleuth also, with his keen, discerning eye, detected the fact that the young man was evidently anxious to separate from his companion, while Bigelow was equally determined and anxious that he should not. Sleuth managed under the darkness to get near enough to overhear a part of the conversation that passed between the two men, and the conversation he overheard was very startling and suggestive.

"You did not meet me last night as you promised, Frank."

The young man answered, in a stammering and hesitating manner:

"No, I could not be on hand last night."

"Where were you?"

"I remained home last night. I went right home from the office."

"Hold on, that won't do. What are you giving me?"

"It's the truth."

"No, sir, you were seen; you were into the game last night, and you were a loser."

"No. I swear I went straight home from the office."

"Then you have a double?"

"I don't know about that."

"You were seen."

"If any one thinks they saw me I must have a double."

"There is a man who saw you."

"Then it is some one who looks like me."

"Where were you going to-night?"

"Nowhere."

"Come with me."

"Where do you want me to go?"

"We'll take a look in at a game."

"I can't go now."

"Why not?"

"I've an appointment."

"Who with?"

"I can't tell you."

"How long will your engagement detain you?"

"I don't know."

"Can you meet me at midnight?"

"I don't know."

"Will you?"

The young man appeared to consider a moment, and then, in a desperate tone, said:

"Yes, I will meet you."

"Now see here, Frank, old man, I've a good scheme to pull you out of the hole you are in. Meet me, and I will open up the whole business to you."

"I don't think I can ever get out of the hole I am in."

"Yes, you can; I am a friend of yours, but you won't believe it. But you will meet me?"

"Yes; I will meet you."

"I have your word?"

"Yes."

"And you mean to keep it, old boy?"

"Yes; I will meet you."

Sleuth was deeply interested. He had formed a certain idea. He had encountered during his long career so many

cases similar to what he judged the one to be that was attracting his attention at that moment.

"Now mind, Frank, I tell you I've a big scheme—a sure thing. I know you've suffered a great deal, but I'll pull you out if you will meet me. Good-night."

Bigelow walked away, and the young man still stood under the gas-light, and the detective overheard him mutter:

"Yes, you'll pull me out a heap! It was you who got me into the hole, you scoundrel! But I'll meet you. Yes, I'll meet you; but it is the last time we'll meet. I'll take one more chance, and then—"

The young man stopped short; but, after a moment, added:

"Yes, yes; I'll meet you—and the meeting will be my last, for it will be on the verge of the grave. Yes, yes; an open grave yawns before me. I'll meet him!"

A moment the detective was in a quandary. He did not decide on the instant whether to follow Bigelow or get upon the track of the young man; but after a few moments' thought he reached a conclusion, and muttered:

"I'll just follow this young fellow. I may be of use to him to-night, and I may pull him out of the hole."

Old Sleuth had a great partiality for young men—especially when he considered them good and noble at heart. He had decided that this young man was good at heart. He could see that he had done some wrong, and he discerned also that the young fellow suffered, not from fear altogether, but from the consciousness of having taken a false step.

The young man walked down the street and Sleuth followed. Soon the youth turned and proceeded toward Union Square Park; and, reaching a certain point, he commenced to walk to and fro.

Sleuth was at hand. He had a way of concealing himself, and it was an easy matter in the present instance, as the young fellow was so deeply absorbed he had little attention to give to his surroundings. At length the detective heard him say:

"Will she come? I hope not. Oh, why did I confide in her? I have but caused her deep anxiety; and yet, why should she be anxious on my account?"

"Ah!" muttered the detective, "so there is a woman in the case;" and little did the great detective dream of the startling *dénouement* that was to follow his shadow of this troubled youth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE young man continued to pace to and fro, and the interest of the detective increased, and so matters proceeded until the youth exclaimed:

"She will not come! It is well. Alas! I shall never see her again, for I can not endure this agony any longer!"

The young man was about turning away when suddenly there appeared, walking very rapidly along the path, a young lady. The latter's face was concealed behind a veil, but the youth saw her approaching and recognized her despite the veil, for he exclaimed:

"Alas! here she comes."

A moment later and the veiled lady had approached near enough to speak, and she said:

"I have kept you waiting."

When Sleuth heard the voice he gave a start, and his heart beat rapidly as he muttered:

"Great Scott! that voice—what does it mean? Can it be— No, no, it can not be!"

Meantime the youth had answered:

"It does not matter."

"I could not help keeping you waiting, and I regret it very much."

"It's all right."

"What has happened, Frank?"

"Nothing."

"There has been no change?"

"No."

"Oh, dear! I wish I could help you. But you must hope; help will come from some direction."

"I do not look for help now. I must face my doom. Yes, the consequences of my crime confront me, my sin has found me out!"

"It was a sin, Frank, but it was not a crime."

"Ah, I can not cloak it—yes, it was a crime."

"But you will never do so again, and relief will come. You can conceal it until help comes."

"I have concealed it as long as I can."

"Frank," suddenly exclaimed the veiled lady, "I can help you, I think."

"You can help me?"

"Yes."

Sleuth was amazed.

"Great guns!" he muttered. "What does this mean? There can be no mistake. I know that voice. What does she do here? Who is Frank, and what has been his crime, and how can she help him?"

There followed a moment's silence, and the young man asked:

"How can you help me?"

"I have four hundred dollars."

"You have four hundred dollars?"

"Yes."

"And you propose to loan this money to me?"

"Yes."

"You are a darling girl, a brave, good, kind-hearted girl, but I can not take your money."

"You must take it."

"No, no; I will not."

"But you must—you can pay me back. It may appear strange that I did not tell you about this money before, but some day I will explain all to you."

"I will not take your four hundred dollars."

"You must take it, and, as I said, some day you can pay me back."

"No, keep your money."

"No, no, Frank, it is yours as a loan."

"You compel me to make a confession."

"A confession?"

"Yes. The amount is not sufficient for me."

The veiled girl uttered a sudden cry of pain, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Frank, I fear!"

"What do you fear?"

"I dare not tell you."

"Yes, tell me. Let it all be plain and direct between us now."

"You have broken your promise to me."

"Broken my promise?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"When you first revealed this matter to me, you said the amount was less than four hundred dollars, and now you say four hundred dollars is not enough to cover your indebtedness. You promised me you would not increase the debt?"

"I did."

"And you have broken your promise?"

"Yes."

The young man spoke in a tone of great desperation.

"Oh, how could you do it, Frank?"

"I can not explain now. I may some day."

"Those men got hold of you again?"

"Well, yes."

"You hoped to raise the amount the same way you lost?"

"I admit that what you charge is true."

"I warned you against those men."

"I know it."

"They are only seeking to get you deeper in the mire."

"I know it."

"And why did you yield to them?"

"I am mad. I have lost all my manhood—all power over my will. I am a wreck."

"Oh, Frank, it is terrible to hear you talk in this manner!"

Sleuth heard every word that passed, and he was amazed—yes, amazed; for reasons that will appear.

The young man was silent for a moment, and then he said:

"Gussie, how is it you take such a deep interest in me?"

"Frank, you know well."

Sleuth's suspicions were fully confirmed. When the veiled lady had first spoken he thought the voice sounded familiar, and as the conversation proceeded his suspicions grew stronger, and, at last, all doubt was removed. The young man had addressed the veiled lady as Gussie, and

the detective knew it was Gussie Thatford who was a party to this strange dialogue. Gussie Thatford was the veiled lady—the *incognita*. The detective did not know what to make of her presence there at that moment. He had left her in his home. He had given her strict injunctions not to go forth upon the street, and she had disobeyed him, and she had let it be betrayed that she had a deep interest in a young man who was a confessed criminal.

"There is some strange mystery here," muttered the detective.

He admitted a mystery, and yet he pretty well discerned one phase of the strange incident.

The young man had asked: "Why do you take such a strange interest in me?" and the veiled lady had answered: "Frank, you know well," and here was the mystery.

There followed a few moments of silence—yes, minutes actually passed before the young man spoke again, and then Sleuth detected deep emotion in his voice, as he said:

"Gussie, under different circumstances I would have something to say to you, but as things stand I will be silent, and will only say that I thank you for your deep interest in me, and right here, and now, I propose to bid you good-bye."

"You are going away, Frank?"

"Yes, I am going away."

"Where are you going?"

"It is a secret, Gussie. I am going away to escape arrest and exposure."

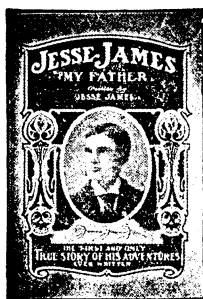
"Frank, your resolution meets my hearty approval. It is wise for you to go away, since danger menaces you. Yes, go away. And in time you can earn money and clear yourself, and in the meantime I will work and save my money, and we will soon have enough; but if you stay here you will get deeper and deeper in debt."

Little did the fair girl dream of the bourn to which the young man intended to go.

*The conclusion of
this thrilling narrative of
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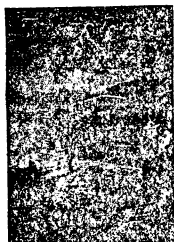
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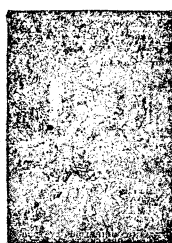
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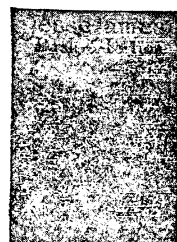
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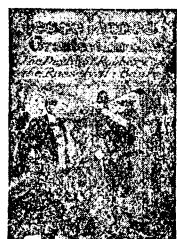
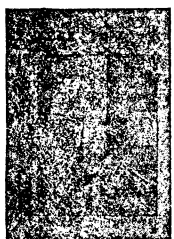
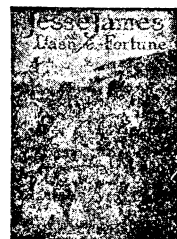
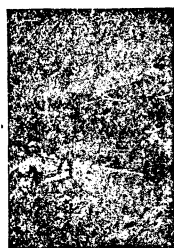
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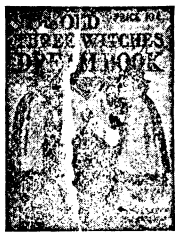
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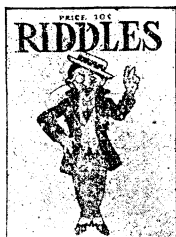


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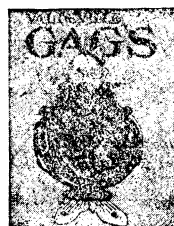
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6. JACK STANDFAST'S HONOR, or Teaching His Enemy a Lesson.
7. JACK STANDFAST TO THE RESCUE, or Saving a Life on a Frozen River.
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11. JACK STANDFAST'S FRIENDSHIP, or one Brave Boy Against a Hundred.
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13. JACK STANDFAST WINNING HIS "G" or Making the Indoor Track Team.
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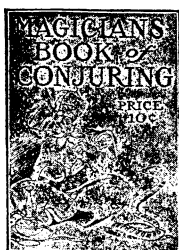
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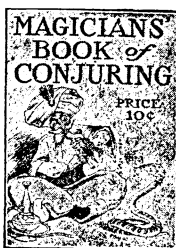
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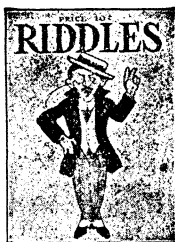


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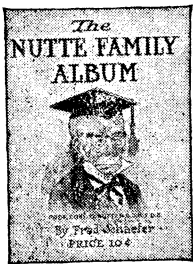
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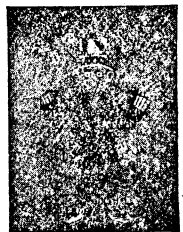
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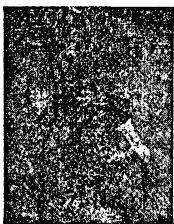
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